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# THE WORLD CRISIS

*(Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future)*

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IMPRIMERIE DE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
Pondicherry

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*Sri Aurobindo*



## I

### THE EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS

**S**RI Aurobindo has seen in his unique Yogic vision that humanity is proceeding towards a divine realisation on the earth through a progressive evolution. That realisation will come by the power of the divine Truth, and that Truth will itself determine the nature of its own manifestation. It is not possible to give an exact account of that realisation beforehand. Still whatever general ideas the human intelligence can form about it have been expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his books, especially in his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*. And he is not content with giving a highly illuminating and inspiring philosophical account of the thing; he has ascertained by Yogic means what man will actually have to do in order to attain the goal, and has been preparing the conditions under which the Truth can manifest. That is the real work in which Sri Aurobindo is at present engaged; it cannot be expected that until the ideal he has foreseen takes a concrete shape, people in general will be able to understand

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its significance or proceed eagerly to accept or welcome it. Still there are people all over the world today who are awakening to this ideal of future realisation and are feeling the inner call to undertake the requisite discipline and sadhana. It is our object here to give them some help in understanding the ideal and the path of Sri Aurobindo.

The ideal which the modern mind has understood very well is the rationalisation of life, "an ideal material organisation of civilisation and comfort, the use of reason and science and education for the generalisation of a utilitarian rationality which will make the individual a perfected social being in a perfected economic society." This rationalistic ideal, however, is not so modern as it is supposed to be. Rousseau and other rationalists of the eighteenth century in Europe brought about the French Revolution following this very ideal; but whatever might have been its other results, it certainly did not lead to the formation of an ideal order of society. The later attempt of the Marxists on the same lines has led no doubt to a new order of social organisation in Russia, but there has not been any fundamental change or improvement in the condition of men; in some important respects, as in the matter of individual freedom, there has been a definite deterioration; and Soviet Russia is already being compelled to give

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up one by one the fundamental tenets of Marxism, even its opposition to religion and spirituality. In ancient times, essentially the same rationalistic ideal was followed by the Greeks—the ideal of perfecting human life and human society with the help of the intellect. But ancient India could not accept this ideal as the highest for mankind. The ideal of India was very well expressed in the famous words of Maitreyi, “What shall I do with anything that will not lead me to Immortality?” Human nature is many-sided and very complex; man has a body, a vital, a mind, and each of these has its own claims and needs. Only the barbarian can remain satisfied with the well-being of the body and the satisfaction of vital desires; man is chiefly a mental being and his mind erects the ideals of the True, the Good, the Beautiful—man’s humanity really consists in the pursuit of these ideals for their own sake. But it is found that these mental ideals do not accord with the claims and demands of the body and the life of man; again the conflict between his body and his life also is considerable. That is really why human life is full of so many conflicts and contradictions; through the ages, all attempts of man to erect an ideal order of society have broken down again and again on account of these inherent conflicts in human nature. The desire for possession, domination, exploitation



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is inherent in the vital nature of man, and even the most satisfactory economic condition that any social scheme can bring about will not appease these hungers in man; even the very peace and security prevailing in the world will be found monotonous and boring, and the vital nature will seek for new adventures leading to social conflicts and international wars. The intellectual reason of man has not the power to establish a harmony among these discordant elements and lead them to their true fulfilment; that can be done only by a spiritual consciousness which is greater and higher than the mind, *yo buddheh paratastu sah*:

“Mind and life themselves cannot grow into their fullness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well as transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realisation of all for which they are seeking; for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty. These are the things for which our mind, life and body are seeking, knowledge, power and joy, and to reject that by which all

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these arrive at their utmost plenitude is to shut them out from their own highest consummation." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p.586.)

Intellectual knowledge and mental will are not all the instruments of our consciousness and energy; we have other powers which it is the aim of Nature in us to discover and actualise:

"All man's age-long effort, his action, society, art, ethics, science, religion, all the manifold activities by which he expresses and increases his mental, vital, physical, spiritual existence, are episodes in the vast drama of this endeavour of nature and have behind their limited apparent aims no other true sense or foundation. For the individual to arrive at the divine universality and supreme infinity, live in it, possess it, to be, know, feel and express that alone in all his being, consciousness, energy, delight of being is what the ancient seers of the Veda meant by the knowledge; that was the Immortality which they set before man as his divine culmination." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p.597.)

The rationalists of modern Europe wanted to eliminate religion from life as being an obstacle to the progress of humanity. They erected a rationalistic religion of humanity, the service of man as man, the observance of moral and social rules conducive to the welfare of

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human life on the earth; they made it a substitute for traditional religion, and it must be admitted that this has done much good to mankind. But this very rationalistic attitude brought about a subjective chaos, and specially after the first devastating European war, "all received values were overthrown and and all firm ground seemed to disappear from its social organisation, its conduct and its culture."

That arch high-brow of Modernism, Aldous Huxley, brought forward a thesis in his writings that whatever a man does, good or bad, virtuous or sinful, can be defended by reason, and a philosophical system can be erected in its support. A practical illustration is found in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* which is a direct negation of all the ideals of humanism, erected into a philosophical system. A society which rejects spiritual values cannot bring forth a better and higher order of human life simply by giving encouragement to Science and Art in the name of culture; in such a society Science will be used as a means of fulfilling the so-called natural evolutionary laws such as "the survival of the fittest" and "the rule of the Herrenvolk", and Art will be made to pamper to the lowest passions in man thus giving a new force and ascendance to his lower nature, and that will really be an evolutionary retrogression.

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“This conscious stress on the material and economic life was in fact a civilised reversion to the first state of man, his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved Science at his disposal. As an element in the total complexity of human life this stress on a perfected economic and material existence has its place in the whole: as a sole or predominant stress it is for humanity itself, for the evolution itself, full of danger.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p. 1158.)

Today the world has arrived at a great crisis. It has to be decided whether man with all his scientific knowledge and power would go back to the barbaric condition or would find and follow the true path of progress and development. If at this crucial hour humanity makes a wrong choice, the whole race may even be wiped out from the face of the earth as being an evolutionary failure, and Nature may start her experiment on some other planet in some other solar system of which recent scientific research is already giving us glimpses. Man has not yet attained the qualities of the head and heart which alone can give him the fitness and the capacity to make a proper use of the great power which has been put into his hands by Science for preparing the material

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conditions of a truly spiritual and divine life on the earth. Men are getting inspiration from within to accomplish something great and on a grand scale; but on account of spiritual ignorance, they are unable to ascertain what that great thing is, and blindly impelled by egoism they are rushing into world struggles to conquer and rule over the whole earth. Science has turned the human race into one unit. One country, one nation, one culture—that is really the goal towards which all the endeavour of Nature is tending; within that world union, there will be unimpeded freedom for the individual as well as the group to develop in their own way thus manifesting infinite variety within a grand world symphony. But the present mind, life and body of man are so weak, ignorant, small, narrow, unregenerate that with these assets he cannot grasp or accept this great ideal of unity in diversity and proceed to realise it in actual life. For this it is necessary to discover the soul, the self, the one divine Reality lying concealed in all human beings behind their outward body, life and mind, to regard these as instruments of the self-expression of that inner Reality and to shape and transform these instruments with its spiritual light and power. Then will man find in this mortal body a divine life, the immortal will be founded in the mortal as the Vedas say; in that truly

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higher order of life all the conflicts will be ultimately solved and all the desires and aspirations of man will find their utmost fulfilment.

“A search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values and a transfer of life to a new foundation.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p. 1164.)

Education and propaganda, it is supposed, would induce men to give up violence and learn to love each other. But experience shows that education can only give a knowledge of things, it cannot bring about any radical change in nature. Unity, equality, co-operation—all these things are needed for the well-being of society; so attempts are being made to suppress all competition and clash of egos by a rigorous social organisation. But under such a regime society will turn into a machine, and the individual will not find the needed freedom and scope for its own development, and that

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is not the way for the solution of the problems of life.

"The individual is indeed the key of the revolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious; its general mass consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop. The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole of life; his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p. 1154.)

A religious movement alone, it is suggested, can save man from the mechanical oppression of a regimented society, at the same time strengthening the social and communal feelings which would ensure an equitable social order. If the religious sense is awakened in man, if

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man follows the right path following the dictates of religion, each one keeping to his own right course, *svadharma*, there can be no conflict between men and men, nations and nations. But experience has amply shown that religion also is defeated by the ignorance and egoism inherent in human nature. The tendency to aggrandise oneself at the expense of others, which is still very strong in man, has exploited religion for its own purpose. Thus though religion may have helped some individuals here and there to grow spiritually, it has not been able to raise society to a higher level. The problem that confronts humanity today cannot be really solved by the usual type of religious, political, social or educational movement—all these human activities have to be taken up into a new integral vision and totally transformed. What is needed is an integral transformation by which divine light, peace, power, love, joy and beauty may be established in human life. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "A total spiritual direction given to the whole of life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself."

But what hope is there in the world that we are witnessing today that such an integral spiritual uplift or transformation of human life would be possible in the near future? Even if that be not possible now, there is no other way;



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for it is idle to hope that human nature will continue essentially to be what it is now and yet a New Order can be ushered in simply by effecting some external changes and reorganisation in the outward modes of life. But the change of human nature that is needed is nothing so impossible or remote, for that which is to be developed is already there within our being—it has not to be acquired or brought from outside or from a distance. The difference between the sleeping state of man and his waking state is very great, but it does not take much time to go from one to the other. What is needed is to awaken the soul that is within us and to remould our external life and nature with the light and power of that inner Divinity. Nature through her long evolutionary course has been preparing man for this consummation; all the crises that occurred in human history have advanced mankind some distance towards that goal. But the crisis that has now come upon us has no parallel in history, and the realisation that it promises to man also has no parallel. In order to actualise and make it true in life what is required is that a certain number of men and women should have a vision of this change, a realisation of its urgent need, an indomitable faith in its possibility and a firm resolution to fulfil all the conditions necessary for its effectuation.

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It is not that this tendency has not already appeared in the human race; there is a growing realisation all over the world that there is no deliverance for mankind without spirituality. And once this aspiration becomes fixed and strong in man, Nature's evolutionary effort will be easier and there will inevitably be a response from the Divine Power above.

The attempt to attain spiritual life by organising Asrams and monasteries has been made in the past; but that attempt has been for the individual salvation of world-shunning saints and sannyasis, the aim of that has been other-worldly, and not the bringing down of a new spiritual power on the earth by which this earthly life can be transformed and divinised. Attempt for social uplift has been made by organised religion and various kinds of idealism; but the lower egoistic nature of man has again and again frustrated all such attempts at building up a New Order of human life. No mental idealism or partial spiritual endeavour can overcome altogether the obstacles inherent in human nature. What is needed is the transcendence of this nature altogether, and finding a new mould of life in a super-nature. There are no doubt many difficulties in the realisation of such an ideal, but if Nature has become ready for such an evolutionary ascent and the Divine Power descends on the

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earth for effecting such an uplift, all difficulties and obstacles will be overcome. The unique sadhana of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has created this sublime possibility.

The objection will be raised that the world has always been what it is now, that the laws of Nature are unsurmountable and that what man has become by Nature cannot be transcended, and he can never be a superman or god; Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad came, they brought the divine message to humanity, but man continues essentially to be the same as ever. The history of mankind no doubt gives some support to such a view; but if we take a deeper and wider view, we shall find that though some broad principles of Nature remain unchanged and are fundamental, the forms that evolve on the basis of these principles have constantly changed giving rise to ever new forms. Our earth has not always been what it is now; even this vast universe with all its stars and galaxies have not always been there. According to modern Science, that which was at the beginning of creation could not be called a universe or a world—that had no definite form; there were no luminous bodies like the suns and the stars, so there was no life; in that inconceivable, unimaginable darkness, minute particles of electricity were moving about apparently at

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random. The universe we now see with our earth stirring in a corner, teeming with living beings of which man is the highest, has been the result of a very long process of evolution and change in the course of which many apparently unexpected and abnormal things have happened—things quite out of the usual way of Nature. Giving an outline of evolution leading to the advent of man on the earth, Sir A. S. Eddington writes:

“Looking back through the long past we picture the beginning of the world—a primeval chaos which time has fashioned into the universe that we know. Its vastness appals the mind; space boundless though not infinite, according to the strange doctrines of science. The world was without form and almost void. But at the earliest stage we can contemplate the void is sparsely broken by tiny electric particles, the germs of the things that are to be; positive and negative they wander aimlessly in solitude, rarely coming near enough to seek or shun one another. They range everywhere so that all space is filled and yet so empty that in comparison the most highly exhausted vacuum on earth is a jostling throng. In the beginning was vastness, solitude and the deepest night. Darkness was upon the face of the deep, for as yet there was no light.”(*Science and the Unseen World.*)

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It is interesting to compare these words of a foremost scientist of the present day with the words uttered by the Vedic Rishis many thousands of years ago in the famous Hymn of Creation in the Rigveda (X. 129):

"In the beginning Darkness was hidden by darkness, all this was an ocean of inconscience when universal being was concealed by fragmentation." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I. Ch. XXV).

Dr. Eddington proceeds, "The years rolled by, million after million."

This is not a strictly correct statement, as there were no years at that time measured by the revolutions of the earth round the Sun. The Vedic language is more accurate,

"Death was not nor immortality nor the knowledge of day and night."

"Slight aggregations," continues Dr. Eddington, "occurring casually in one place and another drew to themselves more and more particles."

Mark the word "casually"; that indicates that here something took place out of the normal way. Thus gravitation slowly parted the primeval chaos and "island universes" were formed. Then these island universes began to rotate, and Science cannot explain how they acquired this rotation. There are so many gaps and missing links in the scientific account of

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the evolution of the universe. The island universes were subdivided by gravitation and gave birth to star clusters and then to stars.

"And with the stars came light, born of the fiercer turmoil which ensued when the electrical particles were drawn from their solitude into dense throngs."

This appearance of a universe of luminous stars out of the primeval darkness is according to modern Science the first step in the universal evolution. Here, so far as Science can say, the work of creation and evolution might have ceased. "For many billions of years the stars may continue to shed their light and heat through the world, feeding on their own matter which disappears bit by bit into aetherial waves." But at one point of time something unusual, exceptional, we may say, miraculous happened and our solar system was produced.

"For what might be called the second day of creation we turn from the general rule to the exceptions. Amid so many myriads there will be a few which by some rare accident have a fate unlike the rest. In the vast expanse of the heavens the traffic is so thin that a star may reasonably count on travelling for the whole of its long life without serious risk of collision. The risk is negligible for any individual star; but ten thousand million stars in our system and more in the systems beyond

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afford a wide playground for chance. This rare accident must have happened to our Sun—an accident to the Sun, but to us the cause of our being here. A star journeying through space casually overtook the Sun, not indeed colliding with it, but approaching so close as to raise a great tidal wave. By this disturbance jets of matter spurted out of the Sun; being carried round by their angular momentum they did not fall back again but condensed into small globes—the planets.” (*Science and the Unseen World.*)

Science thus regards the creation of the solar system as a matter of rare chance; but that is not an explanation, rather a statement of fact that it has so happened. If there were an intelligent creator who wanted to produce a place suitable for the habitation of living and intelligent beings like men in a material world, he would have by a slight interference without disturbing the fundamental laws of matter made the occurrence of such chances and rare incidents possible, and that is what has actually happened not only once but at every critical stage in the wonderful history of the universal manifestation. By the “accident” mentioned above something occurred outside the regular plan of Nature, namely, the appearance of lumps of matter small enough and dense enough to be cool. So long as matter remains

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heaped in immense masses, as we find in the stars, the temperature cannot be less than ten million degrees. By permitting matter to be cool, Nature created a field for the production of strange effects. To the eye of a Scientist Nature appears as a great experimenter who has infinite material and infinite time before her; but that implies an intelligent consciousness behind her which takes delight in infinite variety of creation. There are 92 different kinds of matter in the universe, 92 chemical elements; but how out of uniform tiny electric particles such diversity arose Science cannot say. This finds a rational explanation only in the supposition that the whole universal movement is essentially and ultimately a play of consciousness, and our own limited mental consciousness shows how it delights in imagining and creating diversity in unity. This diversity of matter cannot manifest itself at high temperature and little consequence follows from it; but in the cool planets it asserts itself and produces the wonders studied in chemistry and physics. The second impulse of evolution creating cool planetary globes could have exhausted itself in the formation of inorganic rocks and ores and other materials, as it actually may have happened in other planets. But here again something abnormal and exceptional happened which made possible the appearance



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of the phenomenon of life. Each of the 92 elements embodies in its structural pattern one of the first 92 integers. Thus "the chemical characteristics of element No. 11 (sodium) arise from the fact that it has the power at low temperatures of gathering round it eleven negative particles; those of No. 12 (magnesium) from its power of gathering 12 particles; and so on." These 92 elements by themselves would have produced a material world of considerable but limited diversity. But the element carbon, embodying the number 6, because of the peculiarity of the number 6, opened up unlimited possibilities.

"The carbon atoms love to string themselves in long chains such as those which give toughness to a soap-film. Whilst other atoms organise themselves in twos and threes or it may be in tens, carbon atoms organise themselves in hundreds and thousands. From this potentiality of carbon to form more and more elaborate structure a third impulse of evolution arises, the creation of life and living beings." If Nature in her arithmetic had overlooked the number 6, the conditions for the appearance of life would never have been produced and this can hardly be called an accident.

The account of evolution given by physical Science cannot go further; but it is sufficient to confirm the view that the world has

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a plan behind it and its course is being directed by a conscious being and that that course, so far as our world is concerned, is evolutionary; that is, through a long and gradual process new principles and forms are emerging, keeping intact the basic structure and the fundamental laws. Matter has been the basis on which Life and Mind have appeared; but Life represents a new principle different from Matter, and Mind represents a new principle different from both Matter and Life. Science cannot explain the appearance of these new principles and the very fact that they are new principles, explains why Science sees so many missing links in the evolutionary process of which it sees only the outer aspect. If Matter had been allowed to go on in its own way, life could never have appeared on the face of the earth. Even now we see nowhere living things arising from non-living matter. But the cosmic evolution could not stop there; matter was to be the basis of the manifestation of the infinite in the finite, of the Spirit in embodied beings, of divine life on the earth. That is why through an evolutionary process which is essentially spiritual, life and consciousness first appearing in plants and animals have found their hitherto highest formulation in man. But the mind of man is not yet the spiritual consciousness, though it approaches it and gives the promise

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of its own transcendence. So there is nothing irrational or impossible in the view that this transcendence will be made in the further course of the same evolution, this time assisted by the conscious effort of man himself. And ~~there is also nothing~~ in Science or reason which can justify us in saying that that great crisis has not come now. On the other hand, spiritual vision shows that now has come the time for man to take the next higher step in his evolution. Neither Science nor Philosophy has been able to give a thoroughly satisfactory account of all the processes of Nature taken in their integrality. That can be revealed only to an integral spiritual vision, and it is such a vision we find embodied in Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* which has not only created a new era in philosophical thought but in the actualisation of the hidden possibilities of human life.

Brahman, the ultimate Reality, is infinite and eternal and he is "to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of being which is a supracosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation; for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. All is a manifestation of That; for it dwells even in all that seem to be its opposites and its hidden

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compulsion on them to disclose it is the cause of evolution, on Inconscience to develop from itself its secret consciousness, on the apparent Non-Being to reveal in itself the occult spiritual existence, on the insensible neutrality of matter to develop a various delight of being which must grow, setting itself free from its minor terms, its contrary dualities of pain and pleasure, into the essential delight of existence, the spiritual Ananda." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. p. 558).

Brahman is infinitely enjoying his own delight manifesting the infinite miracles hidden in his own being. One in being he has become many in becoming in order to taste through the many the delight of love, of embrace, of interchange. As the Upanishad says:

"He desired, 'May I be many', He concentrated in Tapas, by Tapas he created the world; creating, he entered into it; entering he became the existent and the beyond-existence, he became the expressed and the unexpressed." (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, II. 6.)

Of the infinite variety of his self-manifestations, one is the gradual evolution of consciousness out of the inconscient. All-conscious, he has hidden himself from himself and descending into self-oblivion has taken the form of inconscient matter, in order to create a basis for the manifestation of his infinite divine

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consciousness in and through many finite material bodies. The organisation of matter step by step so that life and consciousness may appear in it is the meaning of the terrestrial evolution. At every critical stage of this evolution there has been some intervention from above of which Science, confined as it is only to the evidence of the physical senses, cannot give any account. When Life appeared in matter finding a suitable organisation there for its manifestation, an altogether new principle was created—that is why it appears to Science that some links are missing. In the same manner when mind evolved in living beings, it was also a new phenomenon, a new principle altogether. As a matter of fact, all these principles—and there are others higher and greater—are so many different formulations of the one consciousness. Mind, Life, Matter are phenomenally different from each other, but they are essentially one as they are all manifestations of a force which transcends all and is not limited by any of them. There are different planes in existence, each plane being dominated by one of the principles of creation. Above this material world of ours there is the vital plane and above the vital there is the mental plane, each with its characteristic creations; beyond these is the supra-mental plane. In this way there has been a graded creation of planes and worlds originating

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from Sachchidananda Brahman, and a constant action and interaction is going on between these different planes. Our material world is at the bottom, and all the higher planes tend to manifest their characteristic powers and riches here under material conditions. Thus Life appeared in matter on the earth through a pressure on it from the Vital plane; afterwards, when the conditions were ready, mind appeared in earthly life through the influence of the Mental plane from above. Now there is coming on earthly life an insistent pressure from the Supramental plane, and that will turn man into superman, somewhat in the same way as when animal turned into man. This culmination of man is an evolutionary necessity, a thing destined in the divine plan of creation, and it seems that the moment of that great transcendence has arrived; and the tremendous crisis through which the world is passing today is really a part of this great evolutionary crisis. The divine power by which this transformation will be effected will conquer all obstacles and hostile forces and establish the Life Divine on the earth.

When the action of the supramental power begins on the earth, human life even within its own limits of ignorance will find a new harmony. With its full manifestation humanity will be raised to a new status of perfection and fulfilment.

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“Much that is normal to human life would disappear. In the light of gnosis the many mental ideals, constructed principles and systems, conflicting ideals which man has created in all domains of his mind and life, could command no acceptance or reverence; only the truth, if any, which these specious images conceal, could have a chance of entry as elements of a harmony founded on a much wider basis. It is evident that in a life governed by the gnostic consciousness war with its spirit of antagonism and enmity, its brutality, destruction and ignorant violence, political strife with its perpetual conflict, frequent oppression, dishonesties, turpitudes, selfish interests, its ignorance, ineptitude and muddle could have no ground for existence. The arts and the crafts would exist, not for any inferior mental or vital amusement, entertainment of leisure and relieving excitement or pleasure, but as expressions and means of the truth of the spirit and the beauty and delight of existence. Life and body would be no longer tyrannous masters demanding nine-tenths of existence for their satisfaction, but means and powers for the expression of the spirit. At the same time, since the matter and the body are accepted, the control and the right use of physical things would be a part of the realised life of the spirit in the

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manifestation in earth-nature." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. pp. 1179-80.)

"To the normal life-being an existence without the reactions of success and frustration, vital joy and grief, peril and passion, pleasure and pain, the vicissitudes and uncertainties of fate and struggle and battle and endeavour, a joy of novelty and surprise and creation projecting itself into the unknown, might seem to be void of variety and therefore void of vital savour. Any life surpassing these things tends to appear to it as something featureless and empty or cast in the figure of an immutable sameness; the human mind's picture of heaven is the incessant repetition of an eternal monotone. But this is a misconception; for an entry into the gnostic consciousness would be an entry into the infinite. It would be a self-creation bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being, and the interest of the Infinite is much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interest of the finite. The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The delight of the Spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste



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of delight, *rasa*, of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it would be a greater and happier constant miracle." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II. pp. 1184-55.)

## II

### THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL

**S**RI Aurobindo retired from public life and arrived at Pondicherry on April 4, 1910. At Pondicherry, from this time onwards Sri Aurobindo's practice of Yoga became more and more absorbing. He dropped all participation in any political activity, refused more than once a request to preside at the sessions of the restored Indian National Congress and made a rule of abstention from any public utterance of any kind not connected with his spiritual activities or any contribution of articles or writings except what he wrote afterwards in the *Arya*. But this did not mean, as most people suppose, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a spiritual consciousness and action but to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and

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silent spiritual action; for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced far in Yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can act and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it, and this power can be greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which, as soon as Sri Aurobindo had attained to it, he used, at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the results or to feel the necessity of any other kind of action of a public nature. Twice however he found it advisable to take in addition other actions of a public kind. The first was in relation to the second World War. At the beginning, he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene. He declared himself publicly on the side of the Allies, made some financial contributions in answer to the appeal for funds and encouraged those who sought his advice to enter the army or share in the war effort. Inwardly, he put his spiritual

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force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk when everybody was expecting the immediate fall of England and the definitive triumph of Hitler. This he did, because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark and Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, a set back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind. It would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but of Asia, and in it India, an enslavement far more terrible than any she had ever endured, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for her liberation. He allowed also certain letters, he had written in support of the war affirming his views of the Asuric nature and inevitable outcome of Hitlerism, to become public. He supported the Cripps' offer because by its acceptance India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When the negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the spiritual force alone. But the absence of any public intervention in political or other external events has never meant an absorbed withdrawal from the world and life or cessation of all dynamic activities in favour of a life of inner contemplation and an abstracted spiritual existence.

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When in 1922 an appeal was made to Sri Aurobindo to come out of his retirement and take up the leadership of India, he thus replied in a letter to the late Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das: "I think you know my present idea and the attitude towards life and work to which it has brought me. I have become confirmed in a perception which I had always, less clearly and dynamically then, but which has now become more and more evident to me, that the true basis of work and life is the spiritual,—that is to say, a new consciousness to be developed only by Yoga. I see more and more manifestly that man can never get out of the futile circle the race is always treading until he has raised himself on to the new foundation. I believe also that it is the mission of India to make this great victory for the world. But what precisely was the nature of the dynamic power of this great consciousness, what was the condition of its effective truth? How could it be brought down, mobilised, organised, turned upon life? How could our present instruments, intellect, mind, life, body be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge and some mastery of the secret. Not yet its fullness and complete imperative presence,—therefore I have still to

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remain in retirement. For I am determined not to work in the external field till I have the sure and complete possession of this new power of action—not to build except on a perfect foundation.”

That letter was written in November, 1922; since then by his unique Yogic sadhana he has acquired an increasing mastery of that “new power of action” and has initiated some preparatory steps of his life-work. But though a great spiritual and cultural centre has already been created in his Asram at Pondicherry and other smaller centres have begun to grow up in different parts of the country in connection with him, there are as yet not many people who understand the full import and potentialities of his spiritual work—a work which is to embrace all life and means the spiritualisation of all activities, none being excluded. Sri Aurobindo believes that a free India returned to her great spiritual ideal but on new and larger lines is destined to be the means of uplifting the world and initiating a new age of the general evolution and it is towards this ideal that all his work is directed. But what is this spiritual ideal? What is this spiritual force which Sri Aurobindo believes to be the one thing necessary—the one thing that must be at the basis of India’s freedom and greatness? Sri Aurobindo means by spirituality a new

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consciousness which is higher than the mental and the moral and which can be developed by nothing except Yoga. Mental and moral discipline, when properly guided, can serve as a preliminary means for preparing the nature for the higher spiritual consciousness, but it does not by itself constitute spirituality, and the same thing can be said of religion in its ordinary aspects which also belong to the mind and are not true spirituality. The difficulty which people find in understanding the true nature of spirituality rises from the education now current in India which mostly produces the Western mentality in Indian brains. The Western mentality has been moulded by physical science which has mechanised the human intellect; it cannot look into the inner essence of things but only regards the phenomena, the outward behaviour. Thus, it attempts to bring about a new world order through mechanical means, through social and political adjustments. Such a mentality either rejects spirituality altogether or, if it at all accepts it, turns for it to morality and religion, the former consisting of certain outer rules of conduct, the latter of outward rites and ceremonies. But true spirituality is not a thing of rules and principles, it is a life spontaneously outflowing from the inmost Spirit.

It is high time Indians got rid of the tyranny of the mechanised intellect. It is high

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time also they got rid of the incubus of a blind materialism. Even Science now is showing definite signs of emerging from the materialistic phase because it has a new background which suggests a spiritual view of the world, at least is not inimical to it, and also because materialism has led the world into catastrophic social and political upheavals. In his book, "The Structure of Morale," J. T. MacCurdy observes: "At the moment we are beginning to emerge painfully from an age of materialistic philosophy that has been invaluable as the inspiration for applied science, but has led to the neglect of other values, a neglect that is perhaps the ultimate cause of the present war." This sentence is written by a scientist—not by an Archbishop. But people in India, specially our intellectuals, are still under the spell of Western materialism and are imitating Western ideas and ideals without any regard to the genius of their own country. As regards eliminating religion and spirituality from the life of man, that is what the Russian communists have been doing with the utmost thoroughness and with the help of all up-to-date devices. And what has been the result? The fight has now been given up as hopeless. Should we monkeyishly repeat the experiment in India? Why not try the other way more suitable to our national genius and tradition and find out



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the real basis of this unconquerable spiritual urge of mankind? You must understand man, his nature with its roots, before you can hope to solve the problems of human life, and if Yoga goes to the very foundation of human nature, all our work and life must be based on it.

Criticising the view that the changed outlook of Science has become favourable to a spiritual interpretation of life, a reviewer in "The Hindu" observes: "Science is an influence hostile to religion not because it supports any metaphysical position but because it is empirical, and must therefore tend to weaken belief in any system of ideas which lacks empirical foundation." But if the argument be valid that Science is bound to weaken belief in religion, how is it that such a large percentage of the foremost scientists in all ages and in all countries have been ardent believers in religion? And as regards the empirical foundation of Science, it is now admitted that Science can never give us ultimate truths about things as long as it confines itself to data given by sense-experience. That is the real change in the outlook of Science which has been brought about by two great discoveries (the theory of Relativity and the theory of Quanta) in the beginning of the present century, and those who still think that Science can be hostile to a spiritual view do not understand these implications.

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Physics gives us exact knowledge because it is based on exact measurements. But the law of relativity shows that measurement is not absolute, it differs according to the standard used. Thus, the force of a moving body is differently estimated by observers who happen to be moving at different speeds. "Thus the supposed forces cannot have a real objective existence; they are seen to be mere mental constructs which we make for ourselves in our efforts to understand the workings of nature." No one claims that the four-dimensional curved space of modern Science is a reality, but it is accepted as a convenient device for giving a connected and systematic account of the movements of heavenly objects. That is the attitude of modern Science, it does not offer or even attempt any explanation or interpretation of happenings in the world, "it has now for its single aim the discovery of the laws to which these happenings conform—the pattern of events." But how long can Science remain satisfied with this attitude? Its very foundation is the urge in man's minds to know the nature of reality and it started with the object of interpreting all things and all events in the world. In the past century, it thought that it had found the method of knowing and interpreting everything in terms of material forces, and so it became definitely hostile to spirituality; now it

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finds that nothing can be explained in that way and it cannot stop there; its very urge for knowledge will take it beyond its narrow limits and it will find its fulfilment in being a branch of integral spiritual philosophy; it will investigate from the side of matter what spiritual philosophy will deduce from the side of spirit and each will find its fulfilment in the other. That trend of Science has already begun as we find in the attempts of scientists like Dr. Hermann Weyl in Germany, Sir J. C. Bose in India and Sir James Jeans and Sir A. Eddington in England.

And this reconciliation and union of Science and spirituality is possible, nay, inevitable, as both are based on experience. "The Indian mind," says Sri Aurobindo, "does not admit that the only possible test of values or of reality is the scientific test of scrutiny of physical Nature or the everyday normal facts of our psychology. What are the tests of these ordinary or objective values? Evidently experience, experimental analysis and synthesis, reason and intuition,—for I believe the value of intuition is admitted now-a-days by modern philosophy and science. The tests of this other order of truth are the same, experience, experimental analysis and synthesis, reason and intuition; only, since these things are truths of the soul and spirit, it must necessarily be a psychological

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and spiritual experience, a psychological and psycho-physical experimentation, analysis and synthesis, a large intuition which looks into higher realms and realities and possibilities of being, a reason which admits something beyond itself, looks upward to the supra-rational, tries to give as far as may be an account of it to the human intelligence. Yoga is nothing but a well-tested means of opening up the greater realms of experience." (A Defence of Indian Culture.) Science will find the solutions of its riddles in the truths ascertained by Yoga; Yoga will find verifications of its truths in the investigations of Science. Of course, Yogic spiritual truths cannot, in the nature of things, be tested by physical scientific methods, but they furnish a basis on which a reasonable explanation can be found of the "pattern of events" which Science is discovering by its own methods, and that is how there can be an integration of Science and spirituality.

Yogic experience reveals that man is not limited to his mind, life and body, they only constitute his superficial being, a mere wave of the sea which, in its ultimate truth, is the Infinite. At present man is living in ignorance of his true being; that is why his life is full of imperfections and limitations which are at the root of all his sufferings and troubles. Behind his mind, life and body there is his soul, which

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is a portion of the Divine in him; in our outer consciousness we have lost touch with our inner being and with God who is seated in the heart of all creatures. Yogic discipline supplies us with the technique of recovering our union with the Self and the Divine.

“This Self is always to be won; he is won by truth and self-discipline, he is won by a perfect and entire knowledge, he is won by divine living; for He is here bright and luminous in the inner body whom strivers and seekers by the waning of human defects behold.” (Mundaka Upanishad, III.1, Sri Aurobindo’s translation.) When that is accomplished, when we are in direct union with the soul, and our outer life and action is controlled by the divine power and light and bliss inherent in it, human life begins to shed off all its limitations, and even in this material body we attain to divine peace and light and power and joy. That is Immortality or God-life to which humanity has been aspiring since the dawn of its civilization.

This truth of the Spirit was temporarily obscured by the materialistic age out of which we are now emerging “painfully”; it is not that that age has not contributed greatly to the building up of the outer life of man. But now is the time to find the inner basis on which alone the outer life can attain its perfect

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fulfilment. The whole nature of man must be changed and transformed before there can be a really new order of the world, and this cannot be accomplished, as it is being attempted, merely by preaching and propaganda, but, as is being more and more recognised even in the materialistic West, only by a thorough-going psychological discipline based on the deepest knowledge of the Spirit. It is this knowledge of the Spirit which is the true heritage of India and the whole world is waiting to receive it from her. This knowledge is different from what the West, when it tries to rise above the crude level of "Do what you will", considers the key to life's problem, namely, the governance of life according to certain mental rules and principles supposed to be eternal and categorical. Thus the Pope observes: "The profound and ultimate root of the present evils is the refusal to accept a standard of universal morality for the life of the individual, for social life and for international realtions—that is disregard and forgetfulness of the natural laws whose foundation is in God. After denial of God comes denial of the law. From religious and moral agnosticism spring the pernicious errors of the age." But where is the moral standard which is universal? The very fact that the modern mind is vigorously rejecting standards so long recognised as universal and eternal

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shows that there is no absoluteness in them. History also teaches us the same thing. Moral and social codes have differed in different ages and in different countries. Thus the Greeks had a high mental and moral culture which suffered an eclipse in the Middle Ages; then came Christianity introducing a new moral code and reshaping men's views as to the meaning and purpose of life. But after two thousand years of sway over a great part of the world, Christianity has been found wanting; it has lost the allegiance of people on account of its "obvious inability to cope with the crisis of our times." True spirituality does not claim universal validity for any moral rule or religious creed or dogma; it aims at bringing about a fundamental change of consciousness so that men may spontaneously follow the good, the true, the beautiful. As already pointed out earlier, moral rules which prescribe certain modes of action and religion which lays down certain modes of prayer and worship and the performance of certain rites and ceremonies do not by themselves constitute spirituality, though they can, when followed in the right spirit, prepare the mind and heart for rising into the higher spiritual consciousness.

An eminent person recently said that the real authority was the dictates of the heart, which he would call God or Truth. But the

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human heart, until it is chastened and transformed, does not and cannot give us the truth and it is certainly not God. In many people the heart is not yet developed, in others it is deformed and distorted by ignorant prejudices and passions. It is well-known that Hitler listened to an inner voice which guided all his activities; the colossal destruction and human suffering caused by Hitlerite Germany and the terrible doom that she has brought upon herself leave no doubt that the inner voice which guided Hitler was the voice of the Devil. There are so many evil forces active in the world posing as the Divine that it is never safe to depend on the inner voice until one has purified one's heart and mind and come into direct conscious contact with the inner Divine, and this can only be done by Yogic practice. Raja Yoga as described by Patanjali, which was a typical Yoga in ancient India and has had many followers in recent times even among Western people, divides Yogic practice into eight successive and well-defined stages or steps of which the first and most preliminary two steps are Yama and Niyama. Yama consists in abstaining from injury to any life, from falsehood, theft, incontinence and avarice. Niyama consists in purity, contentment, austerity, study of the scriptures and worship of God. It is clear Yama comprises what we call Morality, and



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Niyama comprises what is called Religion. Prayer to God, worship, observance of various rites and ceremonies are all included in the last Niyama, 'Isvara-pranidhana'. These, however, are regarded as 'bahiranga' or external and preliminary means; the real Yoga consists of the last three steps 'dharāna', 'dhyana' and 'sama-dhi', which denote what we call meditation and concentration. It is by a steady practice of these that one can silence his external consciousness and enter into a direct communion with the Self. For advanced sadhaks, the preliminary steps are not necessary; only two things are prescribed for them, 'abhyasa' and 'vairagya', the practice of concentration and the giving up of all attachment not only to objects of vital desires but also to all mental ideas and idealisms, 'sarvadarman parityajya' as the Gita says. A person may strictly follow moral rules and be regular in his religious practices, he will be regarded as a man of character and a religious person, but unless he enters into the inner practices of Yoga he will never find the Spirit or the Divine within him and thus enter into the true spiritual consciousness and spiritual life. He will not be a Yogi or a person consciously united with the Divine. As religion and moral rules are intended for preliminary discipline and preparation, people should be given as much free choice in these matters as

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possible. That is why Nature has evolved so many varieties of religion and moral codes to suit the nature, temperament and capacities of different peoples in different ages. Hinduism had a firm grasp of this truth and allowed different modes of worship to different peoples; indeed it is not a specific religion like Islam or Christianity, it is rather a confederacy of many religions and is ready to admit into its fold all the religions of the world. It is this catholicity of Hinduism which has enabled it to make such remarkable progress in spirituality.

Nowhere else in the world the technique of Yoga and spirituality has been so fully investigated and systematised as it has been done for thousands of years in India, even at the expense of her outer organisation of life, and it is this which the whole world has to learn from India today, even as she has to learn and accept much from the West in order to build up an efficient outer life. But as long as India remains a house divided against itself and under a foreign domination, she cannot effectively serve as a pathfinder for others. It is not merely by preaching spirituality but by the practice of a higher spiritual life that India can become a model of freedom and unity firmly founded on a spiritual basis. The problem of the unity of India is essentially the problem of finding a goal, a lofty ideal which all Indians can accept as their own.

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and practically follow in their life. And that goal is found in the spiritual ideal understood in its true sense and its present and future implications. We talk of planning for India, but is it such a new thing? Did not the Vedic Rishis of India plan for her thousands of years ago? That plan has moulded not only the minds of the Indian people but also the very atmosphere of the country in a particular manner which distinguishes her from other countries in the world. No planning can succeed in India unless it takes up the line which India has been following faithfully for millenniums. It is not only those who are called the Hindus, but all who have made India their home and lived here for some time inevitably get the spiritual mentality, and any planning to be successful here must take that as its basis.

Again, not only India but Nature herself has a mighty plan. Physical science, for its very existence, has to admit that Nature is rational, and to be rational means to have a purpose, a plan, and no planning either in India or any other part of the world can have any deep and lasting result unless it is fundamentally based on the plan of Nature. Humanity has sufficiently advanced to know and understand Nature's planning, at least in its broad outlines, and it is by consciously and deliberately co-operating with Nature's plan that man can really make

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progress towards a higher order of life. Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga is based on a firm grasp of this truth, and all humanity must eventually accept it if it is not to be wiped out as an evolutionary failure.

As a matter of fact, Nature's planning has not only been discovered but has been generally accepted—it is a plan of the evolution of higher forms of life from lower forms, and the highest form so far reached in Nature's evolution is man. And there is nothing to justify the view that man, as he is now, is Nature's highest possible product and that terrestrial evolution is going to end and stop with him. "Upwards goes our way from species to super-species," so taught Nietzsche, the German prophet of supermanhood, and there he gave in a nutshell the whole plan of Nature and the meaning of earthly life:

"I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have you done to surpass man? All beings have created something beyond themselves; and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man?"

"Lo, I teach you the Superman."

"The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth. Upward goes our way from species to superspecies."

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Since Nietzsche this message of the superman has caught the imagination of humanity. The very term "super" has become so popular—super-tank, super-fortress, super-vitamin; the decisions of the Crimean Conference were characterised by the German leaders as super-Versailles. In philosophy, in literature, in science, in art, even in politics and sociology we find the idea of the superman working from behind, if not coming to the front. The Theosophists are speaking of the coming of a new race. In the book, "The Secret of the Self," Iqbal has tried to show that the superman is the true teaching of the Koran. In delivering the sixth Sir J. C. Bose Memorial Lecture on "Evolution of Life Forms in Living Plants" before a distinguished audience Dr. K. P. Biswas recently observed: "In the remote future nobody knows what type of flora and fauna will come to exist on the earth. I am, however, optimistic as regards the future plant and animal life which is expected to reach a far more advanced form. Man will then, by adopting scientific and spiritual methods, be superman and live among far more beautiful trees and flowers and enjoy disease-free nutritious and better types of vegetables and delicious seedless fruits."

Here there is a truth which is an integral part of Nature's planning and accepted by the

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awakened intellect of mankind, it is the ideal of the superman and it is this ideal which can unite all humanity and carry it forward in its evolution. But so that the ideal may be universally accepted, it has to be cleared of all misconceptions and presented in its true light. Thus, it is a gross misconception to suppose that the superman will come only out of a particular religion or a particular race; it is man irrespective of caste, creed or colour who is destined to be the superman. Nietzsche was quite right in exhorting men to sacrifice everything and stake their all so that the superman might appear on the earth. But he conceived the superman to be the embodiment of ruthless power. Perhaps it was his German heritage which thus clouded his prophetic vision and he made a new valuation of moral ideas, saying: "Good is all that enhances the feeling of power, the will to power and power itself. Evil is all that proceeds from weakness." He regarded pity, compassion, fellow-feeling as weaknesses to be discarded relentlessly. We now see how Nazi Germany realised this ideal in practice and what a stupendous disaster it brought to the world. We see Nietzsche's Superman realised in Hitler, the personification of ruthless egoistic power raised to superhuman proportions. Hitler reminds us of Nietzsche's own saying, "Ye would call my Superman a

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devil?" Power is a spiritual force and as such will be found in the superman in the highest degree. But compassion also is a divine attribute. "There is a divine compassion," says Sri Aurobindo "which descends to us from on high and for the man whose nature does not possess it, is not cast in its mould, to pretend to be the superior man, the master man or the superman is a folly and an insolence, for he alone is the superman who manifests the highest nature of the Godhead in humanity." ("Essays on the Gita"). Perhaps it was inevitable that false types should come as a warning to humanity before the true superman might appear who would embody in a human frame the divine attributes of Light, Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Beauty and Bliss.

But how is this going to be realised? In Europe it is supposed that Science will produce the superman, a perfect mind and heart in a perfected body. In a series of broadcast talks in Britain recently given by a group of distinguished scientists (Huxley, Haldane, Wells and others) they discussed the application of the latest discoveries in biology to the life of man. The idea was forcefully expressed in the 70's of the last century in Bulwar Lytton's novel, "The Coming Race". That race got phenomenal power from Vril which was an electric essence of some kind. Vril of the novel

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was rather like a liquid version of the Philosopher's Stone, a super-Vitamin. In our time Aldous Huxley took up the same theme in his "Brave New World", and making a mess of Eastern and Western thought, replaced Vril by the Soma wine of the Vedic Rishis of India. But Soma wine of the Vedas was not really a wine prepared out of the soma plant, though such a wine might have been in vogue at that time. The Vedic Rishis took the Soma wine as a symbol of the Ananda or Bliss which underlies the world play. "From Ananda", says the Upanishad, "all existences are born, by Ananda they remain in being and increase, to Ananda they depart." This Ananda which is upholding the world from behind is to be manifested in our outer life, in our mind, life and body, thus changing our mortality into immortal Bliss. The Soma wine represents essentially the cult of spiritual consciousness and spiritual force, the very core of which is bliss, the cult of the transformation of human life by spirituality.

The technique of such transformation is what we know as Yoga, and in India it has been practised and experimented with in various forms throughout the ages. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a great and unique synthesis of all these systems, it has united them all on the basis of essential principles common to all of them. This is not the place to enter into a



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detailed description of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga; suffice it to say that though it is based on the ancient systems, it is not a mere repetition of any of them but an evolution intended to meet the present needs of mankind. We may, however, note here one capital distinction; the ancient systems presented various methods by which a man can individually attain spiritual life; all these paths are in their own way very difficult to practise and only a very few can hope to attain any success in them. Sri Aurobindo's conception is that what has been achieved individually by special systems of Yoga in the past was only an indication and a preparation of what would be achieved for all mankind in the future, and this would be done by Nature herself when she takes the next higher step in her evolution. Man will become superman in the natural course of evolution just as animal became man, and plant became animal in the previous stages of terrestrial evolution. The chief difference in this last step is that man will have consciously to co-operate with Nature; it will still be a process of Nature as man's intelligence and his higher consciousness are themselves products of natural evolution intended to lead it to the next higher stage. This process of co-operation is to be found in the spiritual psychological discipline which India has been perfecting for millenniums,

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even neglecting the organisation of her outer life, and this discipline has been further systematised and perfected in the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Distinguished Professors of Philosophy in India are adopting this view of spiritual evolution in order to meet the usual modernist criticism of spirituality that it is not progressive and scientific. Thus, addressing a crowded gathering at the Indian Chamber of Commerce Hall, Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan recently observed: "Matter has grown into consciousness, consciousness into animal variety and animal variety has resulted in self-consciousness in human being. It is the scientific outlook that reveals to us that the whole world is in a state of evolution, from matter to life, from life to consciousness, from consciousness to self-consciousness. Man is also to evolve, to grow into a larger consciousness. This transformation calls forth a discipline in man and this discipline is supplied by religion (spirituality)." If man is to remain in his present mental consciousness, the highest consciousness as yet developed on the earth, there can be no final solution of the problems of life, and attempts to rid it of evil and suffering will be somewhat a vain labour like that of trying to straighten the tail of a dog. It is the perception of this imperfect nature of human life and

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human consciousness that led spiritual endeavour in the past to withdraw from life and activity in the world altogether and to find peace and bliss in the pure consciousness of the Self or Purusha. The creative vision of Sri Aurobindo has brought a fresh outlook in spiritual endeavour. One has to give up all obsessing attachment to the present mental, vital and physical movements and habits and turn inward to find the Self or Spirit within oneself. By finding the Self and living in the silence and bliss of the spiritual consciousness, one becomes the spiritual man; but that, according to Sri Aurobindo, is only the first step towards the gnostic being or the superman. The next step is to call the higher divine Force into our mind, life and body to effectuate their transformation and realise a higher divine life on the earth. "The spiritual man is one who has discovered his soul; he has found his self and lives in that, is conscious of it, has the joy of it; he needs nothing external for his completeness of existence. The gnostic being starting from this new basis takes up our ignorant becoming and turns it into a luminous becoming of knowledge and a realised power of being." The transformation of man into superman cannot be achieved by mere religious discipline or spiritual effort; as we have said above, it is Nature which will lead man to that

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consummation, and here by Nature we do not mean the inconscient physical Nature apparently bound to fixed laws envisaged by physical Science but the divine consciousness that is behind it; it is the divine Conscious Force, "the One whom we adore as the Mother" and who dominates all existence, manifesting the worlds out of the infinite being of the Supreme of whom it is the executive power. The co-operation, the personal effort that is required of the individual, is an unshakable faith in the supramental future of man, a fixed and unfailing aspiration, an unreserved surrender of all one is and has to the supreme Mother and a resolute rejection of all habits and movements that stand in the way of the working of the force of the Divine Mother in us. "The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda." (Sri Aurobindo's "The Mother").

Here, then, is a goal, an ideal which all Indians can accept and realise in themselves, thus giving a practical lead to the rest of humanity. No other "ism" or ideology can attract the allegiance of all or of a majority of Indians and thus pave the way to her national and

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cultural unity which must be accomplished now if India is to survive at all. It is not that other "isms" or ideologies have absolutely no truth in them; the very fact that they are followed by some people with great enthusiasm belies such an assumption. Each "ism" has some truth in it but it is a partial truth and ignores other aspects, and no entirely satisfactory and lasting structure can be built upon it. Truth is complex and many-sided and cannot be expressed in simple slogans which readily appeal to unthinking people. Only that ideology can be accepted as true which recognises the element of truth that is there in other slogans and ideals and finds a place for it in a complex whole. Sri Aurobindo's ideal of spirituality gives us such an integral vision and total truth, and it can serve as an effective basis not only of Indian unity but of the unity of all mankind which is so urgently needed at the present moment. The Russian delegates to the World Trade Union Congress recently held in London aptly observed: "We are not attending the conference as propagandists. We want world unity, because we feel that without it there is little hope of lasting peace."

India is rent today with many conflicting ideologies. One that has caught the imagination of many of our young people is Marxism. But in their enthusiasm for the bold social experiment

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in Soviet Russia, they blind themselves to its fatal defects. As a matter of fact, the Marxist advocacy of violence, suppression of the individual and atheism has made Bolshevism a terror to the nearest neighbours of Russia, and we know how Hitler, in his sinister designs on Europe and the world, exploited this terror. The achievement of Bolshevism in breaking up the Czarist regime and improving the condition of the people has been very great, but all these could have been done without going to the extremes of Marxism. Czarist Russia accepted Bolshevism though not without much poignant struggle; but Rosa Luxemburg, a friend and colleague of Lenin, did not succeed in inducing the German workers to accept it. Neither in economy nor in culture Russia has been able to achieve anything distinctly superior to what has been done in other advanced countries in Europe and America; she has not been able to raise human life to a higher level and bring any radical change in human nature which, as we have seen above, can be done only by spirituality which is banned by Marxism. And to repeat the Soviet experiment in India would be courting the greatest disaster. The whole trend of Indian culture has been spiritual, and you cannot wipe out the great past of a great people. Let us make a proper valuation of the Soviet experiment and intelligently

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accept all that is valuable in it. Poverty must be completely abolished and the exploitation of one class by another must cease for good and every man and woman, irrespective of caste or creed, must be given the fullest opportunity to develop his or her possibilities; all these can be fully achieved through spiritual means and are envisaged in the ideal of Sri Aurobindo. India even in recent times has proved the falsity of the Marxist adage, "Religion is the opiate of the people." The Swadeshi movement in Bengal which brought about the national re-awakening throughout India got its inspiration from Dakshineswar, from the spiritual teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda; all the leaders of that pioneer movement were disciples of spiritual Gurus. And here in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram today we see how scientists, philosophers, poets, artists are finding the spiritual atmosphere most suitable and congenial to the growth of their creative faculties.

Another great stumbling-block in the path of India's forward march is medievalism; it consists in clinging obstinately to outworn creeds and 'dogmas' in religion and to social customs which have lost their utility even if they had any in past times. This is at the root of Hindu-Muslim conflict in India and of such evil customs as untouchability which are eating into the vitals of Indian life. The remedy is to find

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a higher spiritual ideal in which all religions will find their own fulfilment and which will show the effective path to a higher and better status of social life. Such an ideal we find delineated with profundity and comprehensiveness in Sri Aurobindo's great book, "The Life Divine". As in its basis it is in harmony with the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads, it will be readily accepted by the Hindus all over India. From the side of Christianity it has been hailed as the greatest book of our age by the late Sir Francis Younghusband who observed: "*The Life Divine* could not have appeared at a more opportune moment." From the side of Islam it is worth quoting the following observations made by a distinguished Professor of Islamic Philosophy: "I was overjoyed to find over again the corroboration of the great truths of higher Sufism in this profound message of Sri Aurobindo demonstrating once more the Unity and Universality of all real Religions. Creeds contend but the Vision of Truth unites.... One of the soul-satisfying aspects of Sri Aurobindo's book is that he expounds a Mysticism which seeks not to mystify but to clarify. The latest achievements of Physics as well as Psychology are accepted as corroborations, even atheism is accepted as a passing phase in the evolution of the Spirit.... Even in the darkest movements of



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Matter God is implicit. The material, the vital, the mental, the supramental and the spiritual are all gradations of one Being which according to the Qoran is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Appearance and the Reality. These great truths are expounded in the immortal book of Sri Aurobindo" (Prof. Khalifa A. Hakim of the Osmania University).

Lastly, the modern ideal of Rationalism finds favour with many of our intellectuals; it is the cult of freeing the mind and heart from all prejudices and ignorance with the help of reason and improving the condition of man with the help of Science. But human reason is an imperfect instrument and cannot give us the truth; if it removes one superstition, it creates another. Marxism and Nazism are twin children of modern Rationalism, and they should serve as a warning to all. In "Mein Kampf" Hitler deduced from reason and Science all his philosophy of violence, of racial superiority, of the revival of the slavery of the darker races and of women. The very fact that a rational and scientifically minded people like the Germans accepted Hitler as a prophet is sufficient to show the danger of Rationalism. Science and industrialism can do much to remove the poverty of the people and must be accepted; but unless there are proper safeguards, that will not be an unmingled good.

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Japan accepted Western industrialism without safeguards, and turned into an aggressive nation. China did not accept industrialism and has nearly been smashed under Japanese tanks. The ideal of rationalistic culture and art is not sufficient; no country cultivated science more than Germany and art more than Japan and we see to what violence and brutality they could descend. As regards industrialisation, for which our rationalists are crying, they should ponder over the following observations made by Wilfred Wellock in the "New Statesmen": "The tendency of uncontrolled development has been to obliterate traditional and national differences and to sweep larger and ever larger areas of the earth into the maelstrom of industrialism, with its blatant materialism and its mania for cheap quantitative production, and finally into war. Accordingly there is some danger of the whole world rushing towards the precipice. Britain possesses no industrial control switch." This "control-switch" can come only from spirituality which alone can enable man to use the machine without being mechanised by it, and it is the mission of India to teach this secret practically to the whole world. Science and art and culture can be brought to their own fulfilment and perfection only when man finds God within him and makes his outer life and action a manifestation of the inner Divine.

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About the coming spiritual age when man will proceed in this direction Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the "Arya":

"It is the Kingdom of God within, the result of the finding of God not in a distant heaven but within ourselves, of which the state of society in an age of the Truth, a spiritual age, would be the result and the external figure....

"Therefore, a society which was even initially spiritualised would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economic and political structure. As it was to some extent in the ancient Vedic times with the cultural education of the higher classes, so it would be then with all education. It would embrace all knowledge in its scope, but would make the whole trend and aim and the permeating spirit not mere worldly efficiency, but this self-developing and self-finding. It would pursue physical and psychical science not in order merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material human ends, but to know, through and in and behind all that, God in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its masks and behind them. It would make it the aim of ethics not to establish a rule of action whether supplementary

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to or partially corrective of the social law, which is only the law, often clumsy and ignorant, of the pack, the herd, but to develop the divine nature in the human being. It would make it the aim of Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see with a vision that goes behind them and to reveal the Truth and Beauty of which they are the forms.

“It would treat in its sociology the individuals from the saint to the criminal, not as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed out of it, but as souls suffering and entangled in a net and to be saved, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, souls grown from whom help and power can be drawn. The aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative kind, but to give men—not only some but all men—the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all. And in its politics it would not regard the nations within themselves as enormous State machines with man living for the sake of the machine and worshipping it as his God and his larger self, content at the first call to kill others upon its altar and bleed there

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himself so that the machine may remain intact and powerful and be made ever larger, more complex and more cumbrous. Neither would it regard them in their mutual relations as noxious engines meant to discharge upon each other poisonous gas in peace and to rush in times of clash upon each other's hosts and unarmed peoples, full of armed men and belching shot like hostile tanks in a modern battlefield. It would regard them as group souls, God in his human collectivities, souls meant like the individual to grow according to their own nature and by that growth to help each other to find this divine Self in the individual and the collectivity.

"A spiritual age of mankind will not try to make man perfect by machinery or keep him straight by tying up all his limbs.... Its aim will be to diminish the element of external compulsion in human life by awakening the inner Divine compulsion of the spirit within and all the preliminary means it will use will have that for its aim. In the end it will employ chiefly, if not solely, the spiritual compulsion which even the spiritual individual can exercise on those around him,—and how much more should a spiritual society be able to do it?—that which awakens within the desire and the power to grow through one's own nature into the Divine. For the perfectly

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spiritualised society will be one in which, as is dreamed by the spiritual anarchist, all men will be entirely free, and it will be so because the preliminary condition will have been satisfied. In that state each man will be not a law to himself, but the law, the Divine law, because he will be a soul living in the Divine and not an ego living mainly, if not entirely, for itself. His life will be led by the law of his own divine nature liberated from the ego. And this is what the religions have seen with a more or less adequate intuition, but most often as in a glass darkly, that which they called and which is again beginning to be called by some who see, the kingdom of God on earth—within in the Spirit, and therefore, for the one is the material result of the other, His kingdom without in the life of humanity.” (The Psychology of Social Development).

### III

## THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

**T**HE book "The Yoga and its Objects" gives a simple, clear and beautiful exposition, within a short compass, of what Sri Aurobind means by Yoga. At the present moment there is not only much misconception about the Yoga and the work of Sri Aurobindo, but people often hold fantastic ideas about Yoga itself. It is a common idea that Yoga is something apart from worldly life, and is meant for the exceptional few who feel an urge to renounce life and take up the garb of the ascetic or the sannyasin. Though this view of Yoga applies to certain forms of it practised in India from very ancient times, which regard the world as an illusion and the silent, inactive, featureless Brahman as the only Reality, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is not meant for the renunciation of life but for its integral perfection and fulfilment. Yoga is the true skill in work, says the Gita; extending the significance of this very pregnant saying we can say that Yoga, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is the true skill and art of life. And he has based his Yoga on the interpretation of the Upanishads and the Gita which give us the

true rule of life. "You will then be able to live more and more in the knowledge which the Upanishads and the Gita hold up as the rule of life; you will see the Self in all existing things and all existing things in the Self; you will be aware of all things as Brahman, "sarvam khalvidam brahma." But the crowning realisation of this Yoga is when you become aware of the whole world as the expression, play or 'Lila' of an infinite divine personality. Humanity is not living in this vision now, its outlook is egoistic and it has no sense of the living presence of the divine who is the one Self of all. Man identifies himself with his ego limited to his individual mind, life and body, seeks to live for the satisfaction and aggrandisement of this ego at the expense of others and thus comes into conflict with other egos, individual and national; this is the root cause of all strife and misery of mankind. The knowledge that the ego is not our true Self but only a temporary device of Nature for the development of our individuality, that in our true Self we are one with all humanity and with God, is the spiritual basis on which can develop a perfect human life and society, and this is the object of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. "The Yoga we practise," says Sri Aurobindo, "is not for ourselves alone, but for humanity. Its object is not personal 'mukti' although 'mukti' is a necessary condition of the Yoga, but the libera-



tion of the human race. It is not personal 'ananda', but the bringing down of the divine 'ananda'—Christ's kingdom of heaven, our 'satyayuga' upon earth."

How is this to be accomplished? Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Tantrika Yoga, the Trimarga, all in their own way have shown the hidden possibilities of human life; by practising them one can attain extraordinary physical and mental powers, but they require exclusive strenuous practice and are not meant for the man of the world; and though they develop certain faculties in man, they cannot achieve his integral perfection. But this perfection, which will turn men into gods or supermen, is the goal towards which humanity is advancing through all its vicissitudes; and all the methods of Yoga and religious and spiritual practices, all experiences through which mankind has passed in its long variegated history, have prepared the race for this realisation; Sri Aurobindo has seen in spiritual vision that the time for that consummation is now arrived, and all the processes of his Yoga are directed towards this crowning realisation.

As the goal, so the path. It is this aim of utter transformation and divinisation of human life and all human activities that distinguishes Sri Aurobindo's Yoga from all other Yogas practised before; in fact, it is their fulfilment. In this Yoga, the sadhaka does not depend on

his own effort; but he puts himself entirely into the hands of the Divine Power. "There are other paths that offer more immediate results or at any rate, by offering you some definite 'kriya' you can work at yourselves, give your 'ahankara' the satisfaction of feeling that you are doing something, so many more 'pranayamas' to-day, so much longer a time for the 'asana', so many more repetitions of the 'japa', so much done, so much definite progress marked. But once you have chosen this path, you must cleave to it. Those are human methods, not the way that the infinite Shakti works, which moves silently, sometimes imperceptibly to its goal, advances here, seems to pause there, then mightily and triumphantly reveals the grandiose thing it has done". This path is really the practical application of the supreme word of the Gita, "Abandon all 'dharma's' (all law, rule, means and codes of every kind whether formed by previous habit and belief or imposed from outside) and take refuge in me alone; I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve." "I will deliver,"—you have not to be troubled or struggle yourself as if the responsibility were yours or the result depended on your efforts; a mightier than you is busy with the matter.

This is the true way of the liberation of the human race. Not merely by political,

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economic or social reconstruction, not even by religious or moral discipline, but by the yoga of 'atmasamarpana' a true transformation of human nature can come, and until that is achieved no problem of human life can really be solved. And it is for India to show the path to the world. "The time is at hand for a first movement upward, the first attempt to build up a new harmony and perfection. That is the reason why so many ideas are abroad for the perfection of human society, knowledge, religion and morals. But the true harmony has not yet been found. It is only India that can discover the harmony, because it is only by a change,—not a mere readjustment—of man's present nature that it can be developed, and such a change is not possible except by Yoga. The nature of man and things at present is a discord, a harmony that has got out of tune. The whole heart and action and mind of man must be changed, but from within, not from without, not by political and social institutions, even by creeds and philosophies, but by realisation of God in ourselves and the world and a remoulding of life by that realisation. This can only be effected by 'purna yoga', a yoga not devoted to a particular purpose, even though that purpose be 'mukti' or 'ananda,' but to the fulfilment of the divine humanity in ourselves and others."

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This is the ideal of Sri Aurobindo and the meaning of his great spiritual endeavour. Will India take up this 'sadhana' to-day and speak to the world in the words of her Upanishad—

“Hearken to me, sons of Immortality”?

## IV

### IS IT GOD'S WAR?\*

*"For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-deers, for the enthroning of the Right, I am born from age to age."*

*The Gita.*

**I**T is strange that at this hour of extreme human agony and fortune, there are people who can say,

God's in His Heaven

And all's right with the world.

The truth rather seems to be that even if God had some plan, some accident has happened somewhere and the world has gone very much wrong. God's intention with mankind certainly is that people should live in peace and love and harmony. All the religions of the world have taught this for thousands of years. The soul of man thirsts for peace and love, but something has gone very wrong somewhere, and the undying aspiration of the human soul still remains unfulfilled.

Who is opposing the will of God? This question will be disallowed by many, especially

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\*Written during the last War.

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in the East, as it implies that God is finite and that there is another Power who can oppose his will. But how otherwise can we explain the existence and persistence of untold evil and suffering in the world? One answer, favoured especially by the Indians, is to regard all suffering as an illusion; but as suffering is perceived to be very real in the world, all world is to be regarded as an illusion. Western people find it more reasonable to believe that God is not infinite and omnipotent, that the world is imperfect and that he is trying to make it perfect—an attempt in which he requires the help of man. There is some element of truth in both these apparently contradictory views. When we are under chloroform or hypnotism, our bodily sufferings become unreal to us; they do not cease to exist, but we enter into a state which is not affected by the sufferings undergone in the outer consciousness. By Yogic psychological practice we can enter into a consciousness which is for ever beyond the touch of worldly sufferings. Most spiritual disciplines regard such a realisation as the true solution of the ills of life, and it is designated by various names as Nirvana, Kaivalya, Mukti or Moksha. The world may go on with all its imperfection and evil, but any man or woman can rise above it by Yogic practice. So it is proved that suffering is not ultimately real; but it remains very real

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and acute for the generality of mankind, and why does God allow it? It is not a sufficient answer to say that God has kept a door for escape; if escape or Mukti is the goal set up for man, why was man at all created and brought into this world of death and tears? It is not at all satisfactory to say that God is finite and is opposed by an evil power, or that he is non-existent or that the world with all its evils is non-existent and illusory; all these theories have been advanced in Philosophy, but though stressing certain aspects of the cosmic problem, they fail to give a true solution. The most reasonable and satisfying answer seems to be that God being infinite and full of bliss has created this world as a field of manifestation, of the realisation of his intrinsic bliss in a new form and under new conditions; here finite beings in finite material bodies will manifest some of the glories of the Infinite. That would be a miracle worthy of an infinite and omnipotent God; but this miracle cannot be accomplished by a fiat like, "Let there be Light, and there was Light"; it has to go through a process of evolution; the present phase of the world is an intermediate and preparatory stage towards that wonderful consummation. The Infinite has broken itself, as it were, into finite beings and is seeking to recover its unity in and through them. The finite beings have to

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become wholly separate from each other so that the joy of the recovery of the unity and the identity may be most intense and ecstatic. It is for the development of the separate individuality that the ego has been evolved as a temporary device. The ego has to disappear when the true spiritual individuality and personality has been developed. "When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar. ... Transform the divided individual into the world-personality; let all thyself be the divine. This is the Goal." (Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts and Glimpses*). When the ego is surrendered to the Divine, we shall find ourselves essentially one with God and other beings and thus find the true spiritual basis for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

But this cannot be done by force; only when the ego surrenders itself freely and consciously, there can be true love and harmony. If God forces things, he will get the submission of automatons, not the love of living and conscious beings; but he is helping men in every way so that they may find and follow the true path. The human ego does not want to surrender itself to the Divine, but following to the extreme the principle of separateness wants to aggrandise itself at the cost of others, and thus arise all conflict and struggle



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in the world. The ego of the individual, of the race, of the nation and country—these are the egoisms which coming into conflict with each other are again and again throwing humanity into cataclysms. It is not by devouring others but losing itself in the Infinite, in God that the ego will find its true fulfilment; but the ego has to find this truth by experience, by suffering; there is no other way. That is the root cause of all the sufferings of humanity. God has not created beings on whom he is inflicting suffering; he himself has become all these finite beings to manifest some of the miracles hidden in His infinite being, and if in the process of this manifestation some suffering is inevitable, he himself shares it with mankind; that is the symbolical significance of the Son of God crucified by the side of two ordinary thieves. Not a sparrow falls, but God falls with it. It is his intention to turn all the sufferings of the world into the stuff of an ineffable unprecedented joy for mankind. It is certainly not his will that this agony should continue even for a day more, if it can be helped; it is human beings with their exaggerated egoism and ignorance who are standing in the way of the divine fulfilment. When this opposition to the divine will takes the form of a physical conflict in the world, God himself acts as the Destroyer. If men choose to persist in their ignorance and suffering,

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even God cannot help them, and the forces of destruction have to be let loose so that the field may be cleared for the divine new creation. When man allows his ego to assume gigantic proportions, he turns himself into an instrument of the Asuric forces who are hostile to the Divine. If such Asuric men are allowed to have their way, they will turn this earth into hell; that is why the Divine has to act for their utter destruction. The Gita says of such men: "Leaning on that way of seeing life, and by its falsehood ruining their souls and their reason, the Asuric men become the centre or instrument of a fierce, Titanic violent action, a power of destruction in the world, a fount of injury and evil." (XVI-9). We are now in the midst of such a "Titanic violent action."

There are many planes and gradations in God's creation, planes where there is no struggle, no process of gradual evolution, but where the beings move in ineffable completeness and where the creation is perfect for ever. But the physical plane where we dwell is an imperfect existence moving towards perfection; there is a process of evolution involving conflict and struggle; it is a field for the great joy of overcoming imperfection and obstacles, of evolving consciousness out of inconscience, of bliss out of pain, of immortality out of death. That is a joy of fight and victory which is not possible in

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the planes of complete and perfect creation. It is a sort of adventure of the Spirit for the sake of the delight of adventure. And the souls who have descended into this adventure are supported by the Divine in all their errors and wanderings, are guided and helped by Him at every step towards the ultimate victory. At times it may appear that the Divine is being frustrated, that His attempts to lead the earthly life to its destined goal are meeting with failure; but these failures are only apparent and they contribute in their own way to the ultimate victory. There is no real defeat or failure for the Divine; what He has decreed or willed, no force on earth or elsewhere can ever frustrate; those who oppose it, help its fulfilment by their very opposition. Opposition is possible only because the Divine has allowed it as an integral part of the play; the hostile undivine forces are there because they have their use, they test the souls and show the imperfections that have to be overcome, and by their opposition they help the wonderful and masterly process of spiritual evolution. They will dissolve and disappear when their work in the divine plan is over. But once they are given the right to exist and operate as hostile forces, they tend to carry their hostility to the extreme; hence arises the struggle between the divine and undivine forces, and the religions of the world are

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full of symbolical stories about this conflict between the forces of light and darkness. This struggle has its counterpart in the struggles of human beings. The reign of the Divine has not yet been established on the earth, the conditions needed for that have not been created; but in spite of all their blunders and revolts, men have been advancing towards the divine goal helped by the ever-active divine force and divine grace. The Asuric forces have up till now dominated the world, and taking advantage of the weakness and ignorance of human beings have used them as instruments of their hostile and undivine actions. But now the moment has arrived for making an advance towards the establishment of the rule of God on earth, of Christ's kingdom of heaven, the "new Earth" of Islam, our *Satyayuga*. That is why there has been an unprecedented uprush of hostile forces who are determined to destroy everything that would help this divine fulfilment so that they may perpetuate their hold on the lives of human beings on the earth; and for this Asuric act of universal destruction, they are finding apt instruments in men and nations who are swayed by passions of revenge, greed and world-domination and also in persons who benighted by ignorance and prejudice blind themselves to the tremendous issue at stake and unwittingly place themselves on the side of the

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hostile forces. This is the real meaning of the greatest crisis through which humanity is passing at the present moment.

This is not really a war between nations and nations; "it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future." It is a war to prevent the forces of darkness from taking entire possession of humanity through whatever nations or powers they can make their instruments. The soul in man cannot grow to its full spiritual stature unless it has the fullest freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of association and worship. "There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side (the Axis) wins, there will be an end of all such freedom; ...there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine work to be done." "The world is fighting for its spiritual life", and even children are being

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inspired to sacrifice themselves so that freedom may live on earth and the forces of darkness and oppression be conquered for ever. This is typified in the following incident which occurred in Poland. The school children of Bydgoszez refused to shout "Heil Hitler" under the severest threat, and were shot one after another, 136 children, not one afraid on seeing the dreadful spectacle of their companions falling, not a shudder of awe, not a desire even in this last moment, to obey the order and save their lives. It is by such courage and sacrifice that the forces of darkness can be vanquished utterly. "All the nations who have stood to oppose them, whatever their defects and mistakes in the past or the present—all nations have defects and commit serious mistakes—they are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura."

## VI

### THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY

#### I. THE ABOLITION OF WAR

**T**HE atomic bomb has telescoped history. The building up of human unity and world peace, on account of intrinsic difficulties, would have taken a long time, but now it must be accomplished without delay, if humanity is to live at all. President Truman recently remarked that if there be another war it would be a global war fought with such weapons as the atomic bomb and that would mean the sure destruction of civilisation. Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister of Britain, also made a similar remark some time ago. These are the two persons who had taken upon themselves the tremendous responsibility of using the atomic bomb which has shocked the moral sense of the whole world and struck such a terror into the heart of mankind as was never known before. It is in such crises that great things are done. If the President and the Prime Minister were truly logical they would have to abolish their army, navy and air force, thus giving a lead to the whole world. For what purpose would be

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served by these monstrous instruments of mass massacre if, in case of another war, humanity cannot be saved in any way? But this is not possible and would indeed be useless unless Russia and other great countries followed suit; these things are too utopian to be expected from nations who have always practised power-politics and to whom idealistic passivism would sound like mere moonshine. Even then for the maintenance of peace and order in the world some military force would have still to be maintained until "the average and the aggregate man become more of an intellectual, moral and spiritual being and less predominantly the vital and emotional half-reasoning human animal". For that purpose the international organisation that is being built up and has already come into existence by the ratification of the United Nations Charter by thirty nations can be entrusted with a sufficiently big force for doing police duties throughout the world. If the nations which possess the secret of the atomic bomb are not prepared to communicate it to any other nation, they would at least have to give a solemn pledge that it will never be used by any individual nation on another, but that it will be placed at the disposal of the international authority which would be responsible for maintaining world peace.



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Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the Arya during the first world war: "War can be abolished if national armies are abolished and even then with difficulty, by the development of some other machinery which humanity does not know how to form or, even if formed, will not for some time be able or willing perfectly to utilise. And there is no chance of national armies being abolished; for each nation distrusts all the others too much, has too many ambitions and hungers, needs to remain armed, if for nothing else, to guard its markets and keep down its dominions, colonies, subject peoples. Commercial ambitions and rivalries, political pride, dreams, longings, jealousies are not going to disappear as if by the touch of a magic wand merely because Europe has in an insane clash of long ripening ambitions, jealousies and hatreds decimated its manhood and flung in three years the resource of decades into the melting-pot of war. The awakening must go much deeper, lay hold upon purer roots of action before the psychology of nations will be transmuted into that something 'wonderous, rich and strange' which will eliminate war and international collisions from our distressed and stumbling human life."

But the unspeakable horrors of the second world war and specially the rocket and the atomic bomb may induce humanity to turn to the only means by which there can be a deep

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psychological change, the means of spiritual discipline; and sooner or later the nations will have to abolish their armies if they really want to avert utter destruction by another global war. "The limitation of armies and armaments," wrote Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya*, "is an illusory remedy. Even if there could be found an effective international means of control, it would cease to operate as soon as the clash of war actually came. The European conflict has shown that, in the course of war, a country can be turned into a huge factory of arms and a nation convert its whole peaceful manhood into an army. England, which started with a small and even insignificant armed force, was able in the course of a single year to raise millions of men and in two to train and equip them and throw them effectively into the balance. This object-lesson is sufficient to show that the limitation of armies and armaments can only lighten the national burden in peace, leaving it by that very fact more resources for the conflict but cannot prevent or even minimise the disastrous intensity and extension of war. Nor will the construction of a stronger international law with a more effective sanction behind it be an indubitable or perfect remedy.... The metaphysical sword of justice can only act because there is a real sword behind it to enforce its decrees and its penalties against the

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rebel and the dissident. And the essential character of this armed force is that it belongs to nobody, to no individual or constituent group of the community except alone to the State, the King or the governing class or body in which sovereign authority is centered. Nor can there be any security if the armed force of the State is balanced or its sole effectivity diminished by the existence of other armed forces belonging to groups and individuals and free in any degree from the central control or able to use their power against the governing authority."

"Therefore, pending the actual evolution of an international State so constituted as to be something other than a mere loose conglomerate of nations or rather a palaver of the deputies of national governments, the reign of peace and unity dreamed of by the idealist could never be possible by these political or administrative means or, if possible, could never be secure. Even if war were eliminated, still as in the nation crime between individuals exists or as other means, such as disastrous general strikes, are used in the war of classes, so here too other means of strife would be developed, much more disastrous perhaps than war. And even they would be needed and inevitable in the economy of Nature not only to meet the psychological necessity of egoistic

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discord and passion and ambition, but as an outlet and an arm for the sense of injustice, of oppressed rights, of thwarted possibilities. The law is always the same, that wherever egoism is the root of action it must bear its own proper results and reactions and, however minimised and kept down they may be by an external machinery, their eventual outburst is sure and can be delayed but not prevented for ever.

“It is apparent at least that no loose formation without a powerful central control could be satisfactory, effective or enduring, even if it were much less loose, much more compact than anything that seem at present likely to evolve in the near future. There must be in the nature of things a second stage, a movement towards greater rigidity, constriction of national liberties and the erection of a unique central authority with a uniform control over the Earth’s People.” (*The Ideal of Human Unity* published in the *Arya* in 1916.)

## II. THE WORLD STATE

Writing about the ideal of human unity Sri Aurobindo thus observed in the *Arya*: “In principle, then, the ideal unification of mankind would be a system in which, as a first rule of common and harmonious life, the human peoples would be allowed to form their own

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groupings according to their natural divisions of locality, race, culture, economic conveniences and not according to the more violent accidents of history or the egoistic will of powerful nations whose policy it must always be to compel the smaller or less timely organised to serve their interests as dependents or obey their commands as subjects." A system of free and natural groupings under a World State which would leave no room for internal discords, incompatibilities and repression and revolt as between race and race or people and people might lead to an ideal solution. "Any system which would appear to stereotype anomalies, eternise injustice and inequality or rest permanently on a principle of compulsion and forced subjection, would have no security and would be condemned by its very nature to transience. It is easy to build up a system in the mind and propose to erect it on foundation which would be at first sight rational and convenient. At first sight it would seem that the unity of mankind could most rationally and conveniently arrange itself upon the basis of a European grouping, an Asiatic grouping, an American grouping with two or three sub-groups in America, Latin and English-speaking, three in Asia, the Mongolian, Indian and West-Asian with Moslem North Africa as an annexe, four in Europe, the Latin,

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Slavonic, Teutonic and Anglo-Celtic, the latter with the colonies that still choose to adhere to it, while Central and Southern Africa might be left to develop under present conditions but with the more human and progressive principles upon which the sentiment of a united humanity would insist."

Such arrangements, however rational in theory, encounter at once actual and obvious difficulties and are usually impracticable. Peoples who would fall into such natural categories are often more at odds with each other than those who are divided by distance or race. Thus Mongolian Japan and Mongolian China are sharply divided in sentiment; Arab and Turk and Persian, although one in Islamic religion and culture, would not, if their present sentiments towards each other persisted, make an entirely happy family. The Slavonic group have similar internal difficulties consisting in the traditional animosity between the northern Slavs and southern Slavs; even today the Pole and the Czech, the Czech and the Slovak, the Slovak and the Ruthene, bear distrust against each other. "But these antipathies," said Sri Aurobindo, "really persist only so long as there is some actual unfriendly pressure or sense of subjugation or domination or fear of the oppression of the individuality of one by the other; once that is removed they would be likely

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to disappear. It may be that a great change and revolution in the world would powerfully and rapidly abolish all the obstacles, as the obstacles of the old regime to a uniform democratic system were abolished in France by the French Revolution."

At that time Sri Aurobindo ruled out of consideration as a practical impossibility in the prevailing international conditions and the prevailing state of international morality the idea of an immediate settlement on the basis of an association of free nationalities, although that would be obviously the ideal basis. "For", he said, "it would take as its principle a harmony of the two great principles, nationalism and internationalism. Its adoption would mean that the problem of human unity would be approached at once on a rational and a sound moral basis, a recognition on one side, of the right of all large natural groupings of men to live and be themselves and the enthronement of respect for national liberty as an established principle of human conduct, on the other, an adequate sense of the need for order, help, mutual participation, a common life and interests in the unified and associated human race. The ideal society or State is that in which respect for individual liberty and free growth of the personal being to his perfection is harmonised with respect for the needs,

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efficiency, solidarity, natural growth and organic perfection of the corporate being, the society or nation. In an ideal aggregate of all humanity, in the international society or State national liberty and free national growth and self-realisation ought in the same way to be progressively harmonised with the solidarity and unified growth and perfection of the human race.

“Therefore, if this basic principle were admitted, there might indeed be fluctuations due to the difficulty of a perfect working combination, as in the growth of the national aggregate there has been sometimes a stress on liberty and at others a stress on efficiency and order; but since the right conditions of the problem would have been recognised from the beginning and not left to be worked out in a blind tug of war, there would be some chance of an earlier reasonable solution with much less friction and violence in the process. But there is little chance of such an unprecedented good fortune for mankind. Ideal conditions cannot be expected, for they demand a psychological clarity, a diffused reasonableness and scientific intelligence and, above all, a moral elevation and rectitude to which neither the mass of mankind nor its leaders and rulers have yet made any approach.”

Discussing the practical difficulties of organising a World State Sri Aurobindo



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summed up thus: "A federal system would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities; it could allow only a play of minor variations. But the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied with that scanty sustenance. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle to centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength. A loose confederation could not be permanent, it must turn in one direction or the other, end either in a close and rigid centralisation or a break up of the loose unity."

The conclusion at which Sri Aurobindo arrives is that while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of the human race, even if achieved, can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life. Sri Aurobindo saw what very few people are able to see even now that though a World State was necessary to maintain world peace and prevent disastrous wars, it would not be an unmixed blessing. Peace assured, there would be an unparalleled development of ease and well-being. But the soul of man would begin to wither in the midst

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of his acquisitions. A World State would have to bring the whole life of humanity under its domination and that would mean a tremendous outer organisation which would crush the life of man under its mechanical burden. "The result would come about for the same essential reasons as in the ancient Roman empire. The conditions of a vigorous life would be lost, liberty, mobile variation and the shock upon each other of freely developing differentiated lives."

"The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which will at once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to respect the principle of freedom." "There would be needed a religion of humanity much more powerful, explicit, self-conscious, universal in its appeal than the nationalist's religion of country: the clear recognition by man in all his thought and life of a single soul in humanity of which each man and each people is an incarnation and soul form; an ascension of man beyond the principle of ego which lives in separateness,—and yet there must be no destruction of individuality, for without that man would stagnate; a principle and arrangement of the common life which would give free play to individual variation, interchange in diversity and the need of adventure and conquest by which the soul of man lives and

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grows great, and sufficient means of expressing all the resultant complex life and growth in a flexible and progressive form of human society."

"A spiritual religion of humanity," said Sri Aurobindo, "is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity is the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one; that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth and that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellowmen will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation, but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the

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individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road."

"Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing,—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection." (*The Ideal of Human Unity* published in the 'Arya' in July, 1918.)

## VII

### THE WORLD ORDER AND WORLD RELIGION

**W**E want, we need, a world religion now as the basis of a world order—that is an insistent call coming from many quarters. But as yet there is no unanimity about the nature and scope of such a world religion, and the way in which it can best serve as the stable basis of a new world order which has become an urgent need of mankind. Each of the historic religions is putting forward its claim to be the world religion. But there is little hope that all humanity will accept any of them. There are others who try to show that all religions are essentially one and that the need of the day is not the preaching of any particular religion but the practice of what is professed by all the religions of the world. Thus Swami Sivananda writes in his journal, *The Divine Life*: “The ideals and principles of all the religions are always noble. But practice needs sincerity which is rarely found among us. Many preach Buddhism, but no one gives up desires and *himsa*. Many preach Christianity, but no one practises love and forgiveness. Many preach

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Islam, but no one recognizes the brotherhood of man. Many preach Hinduism, but no one realizes the divinity in all. Hence the world is wicked, not for want of truth, not on account of religions; but alas! it is wicked for the lack of true followers of these ideals and religions." But how is it that even after thousands of years of the preaching of so many religions people have not been able to realise the truths of religion in life, except a few individuals here and there? The modern answer to this crucial question is that the creeds and dogmas of religion are based on blind faith and not on ascertained knowledge. "Never have religions so based been efficacious", says Mr. Hamilton Fyfe in the first article in *The Aryan Path of May, 1946*. "We can do better; we can use a foundation vastly more secure, base a rule of life, not on faith, but on certainty—the certainty that only through comradeship with all living creatures can happiness come to man, woman or child." This is the current view proposing to replace religion by morality and humanitarianism, calling this to be the new religion for mankind. But this view also is not so modern as it is supposed to be. We should behave to all our fellow-creatures, non-human as well as human, as we would have them behave to us—is a rule which Confucius formulated 500 years before Christ.

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In more modern times Rousseau cried: "Get rid of your miracles and the whole world will fall at Christ's feet." And that cry was the basis of the so-called religion of humanity which has so much influenced modern thought and modern way of life; but still this modernism culminated in two world wars within 25 years. If there are still people who pin their faith on moral rules and humanitarianism, it is because the social order has been shaken to its foundations and people everywhere are looking for a new understanding of human relationships. In our country Tagore put it thus, 'down below race, rank, religion, to a fundamental humanity, man as man.' But what is overlooked here is that 'fundamental humanity' itself contains an urge towards religion and spirituality, towards God and the Spirit. To meet this demand for God, our moralists seek to erect moral rules and standards themselves as the real God. Thus Mr. Fyfe in the above-mentioned article argues that love is an instinct inherent not only in men but even in animals, love is the greatest evolutionary force, and we need no other supernatural God. Nature is not all love, and if there is a lord of Nature he cannot be a God of love and so worthy of our worship. But love is there as a divine element in man and should be fostered by all means; and here is the clue to a new religion

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which alone can unite all mankind. Says Mr. Fyfe: "Here then is the divine element in Man; here the one result of intellect (sprung from self-awareness) which gives it value as an aid to living. This element, which we (that is, men) alone can cultivate and develop, contains all that was implied in the phrase 'God is Love', which by experience we know to be untrue if God and Nature are one. Turn the phrase round; make it run 'Love is God' and it seems to me we have hit on the right formula, the only possible formula, for a religion, a bond or tie which can unite all mankind". As the learned editor of the Aryan Path rightly points out, Gandhiji also belongs to this school; he identifies religion with the practice of moral principles and while he includes love and chastity and other moral powers, he fastens on truth as the central moral principle and just as Mr. Fyfe identifies God with love and puts as his main doctrine 'Love is God,' so he too puts as his main doctrine 'Truth is God'. But where are the moral ideals which are so absolute that they can take the place of God? As regards this ideal of constructing society on moral principles, Sri Aurobindo observed in the Arya: "The moralist erects in this struggle his absolute standard. To him the needs and desires of the individual are entirely invalid if they conflict with the



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moral law; the social law has no claims upon him if it conflicts with right and conscience. This is his absolute solution that the individual shall have no desires and claims that are not consistent with love, truth and justice, and the community or nation shall hold all things cheap, even its safety and its most pressing interests, in comparison with truth, justice and humanity. No society yet created satisfies this ideal; not only so, but in the present state of morality and of human development, none perhaps can or ought to satisfy it. Nature will not allow it. Nature knows that it should not be. The first reason is that our moral ideals are themselves ill-evolved, ignorant and arbitrary. They assert certain absolute standards in theory; in practice every system of ethics proves either in application unworkable or is in fact a constant coming short of the absolute standard. If it is a compromise or a makeshift, it gives at once a principle of justification to the farther compromises which society and the individual seek to make with it. If it insists on absolute love, justice, right, it is forced to ignore other elements in humanity which equally insist on survival, yet refuse to come within the moral formula. For just as the individual law of desire contains within it invaluable elements of the final perfection which have to be protected against the tyranny of the absorbing social idea,

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so also the innate impulses of individual and collective man contain in them invaluable elements which escape the limits of any ethical formula yet discovered and are yet necessary to the eventual divine in man. Moreover absolute love, absolute justice, absolute right reason become in their present application by humanity conflicting principles. Justice seems to demand what love abhors; right reason, considering the facts of nature and human relation dispassionately in search of a satisfying norm or rule, is unable to admit without modification either absolute justice or absolute love. All our standards of action become in fact a flux of compromises. Humanity therefore wavers from one orientation to another, moves upon a zigzag path led by conflicting claims and, on the whole, works out instinctively what Nature intends, though with much waste and suffering, rather than either what it desires or what it holds to be right." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*. Ch. VII)

Such experiments on these lines as have been made on a smaller or larger scale have proved to be of negative value and demonstrated that such mental and moral standards cannot be accepted as absolute and that they cannot constitute a higher world faith or religion.

This is being recognised more and more by thinkers like Sir S. Radhakrishnan who has

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expressed his views in a radio talk given to the people of America on "India's role in the present world crisis." He is not among those modernists who think that men can dispense with God and replace religion and spirituality by mere mental and moral standards, however highly conceived. He said to the American people: "Modern civilisation with its scientific temper and secular humanism is creating a ferment of restlessness all over the world. The leaders of thought and science who enfranchise the mind, the poets and artists who persuade the heart, the moral heroes who serve humanity have all their place, but the first place belongs to the seers, the convinced and inspired souls, the creative men of affirmation, who tell us that man is not simply body and mind, that our personal insufficiencies and social maladjustments are directly traceable to the neglect of the spiritual and the divine, and absorption in the pursuits of the physical and the animal, the instinctive and the intellectual." To the modern charges against religion that it is unscientific and unprogressive, the most effective answer is found in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of spiritual evolution. It is the scientific outlook that reveals to us that the whole world is in a state of evolution, from matter to life, from life to consciousness, from consciousness to self-consciousness in man. Man also is to

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evolve, to grow into the larger consciousness—the growth not being of physical structure, but should be in the world of mind and spirit. This transformation calls forth a discipline in man, and this discipline, says Sir S. Radhakrishnan, is supplied by religion.

But religion, as it is commonly understood and practised, has not much spiritual value in it and cannot by itself lead to the transformation of man and his uplifting to a higher consciousness. When Sir Radhakrishnan speaks of religion as supplying the higher discipline, he really means spirituality, and it is better to keep this distinction in mind. He says, "Religion is spiritual life which is different from a vague religiosity or conventional piety. Religion is not a solemn routine or a superstitious faith. It is not submission to authority or subscription to a formula. Properly understood, religion is a summons to spiritual adventure, to individual regeneration, to a change of consciousness from the ordinary state, where we are cut off from our true Self, to a greater consciousness in which we find our true being." But, as a matter of fact, religion is all these things which he asserts it is not. Religion is a conventional piety, a matter of faith, blind if you like to call it so, a thing of creeds and dogmas and as such it has its place in human life as a preliminary discipline for the spiritual life to which

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alone Sir Radhakrishnan would give the name of religion. But that is a confusion of words which would lead us nowhere. The discipline needed for the transformation of man is supplied by Yoga and not by religion; but Sir Radhakrishnan fights shy of Yoga as being something which takes us away from life and thus is of no use to humanity in its great and difficult struggle. He seems to have an apathy towards mysticism and thus sneers at those who withdraw from life in order to practise Yoga: "There are men who call themselves religious and yet think that their souls have been too precious to be dragged into the affairs of this matter-of-fact world. They have chosen to live in the mystic world." But what then is the higher spiritual consciousness which he himself regards to be the ultimate goal of human evolution? Is that not living in the mystic world? But though some systems of Yoga have had that tendency, Yoga does not necessarily take us away from the life, but gives us the spiritual foundation on which alone a divine life can be evolved on the earth. Yoga, as the Gita says, is the true skill in works, it gives to our natural powers their "right action and their maximum efficiency", and it is the true role of India to teach the world this Yogic technique of the spiritualisation of all our life and action.

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The theory of life Sir Radhakrishnan has adopted is in keeping with the spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo as delineated in *The Life Divine*; but as the discipline required for it he has accepted the Western ideal of the service of man with the religious spirit. As we have already said, religious spirit, love of man, charity and philanthropic work have their uses, they serve to curb the egoism and narrow selfishness of man and prepare their heart and mind for the realisation of unity; but religion cannot altogether uproot that egoism as in order to serve the needs of the general people it has to make a compromise with their egoistic desires and sentiments. Religion allows people to live the egoistic life with certain controls and modifications. In that way they will never realise the Spirit which is the true foundation of unity. What men call love is a poor thing in comparison with the true divine love which can be developed only when we abandon all egoistic relations and all social and moral duties, *sarvadharmān*, for the sake of the Divine, and this is what Sir Radhakrishnan condemns as escapism and fruitless mysticism.

Referring to the new turn of the human mind towards religion, Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine*: "Organised religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way

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for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself.” (*The Life Divine* Vol. II. pp. 1167-8.)

But how many people in the world today can thus give a total spiritual direction to the whole life and the whole nature? A few men here and there can take up the practice of Yoga and thus prepare for self-transcendence, what of the rest of mankind? But, as we have already said, the practice of religion as well as morality is an aid to Yoga, they are the first two subservients, *angas*, of Yoga as Patanjala puts it; and men all over the world have been prepared by these for thousands of years. Now the time has come for the generalisation of Yoga which alone

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can raise humanity to a higher level and a truly new and better life. Creeds and dogmas and rites and ceremonies of religion, which are bound to be different in different ages and climes, become obstacles when they are regarded as the only and the ultimate truths,—even the regarding of the Vedic rites and ceremonies as such is severely condemned by the Gita: “The flowery word which they declare who have not clear discernment, devoted to the creed of the Veda, whose claim is that there is nothing else—those who are misled by such flowery word cannot concentrate their intelligence in Yoga.” (II. 42-43). Referring to the creeds and dogmas of various religions, Sir Radhakrishnan observes: “When they claim for themselves eternal and complete truth, they must in the name of love and reason seek to convert others who, according to them, are in error. Fierce fanaticism, which fought and killed, tortured and imprisoned, burnt and persecuted in every way imaginable for the sake of dogmas and rites which did duty for spirituality, has marred the fair name of religion.” Only when it will be realised that religions with their creeds and dogmas are only preliminary aids to Yoga and that they find their true significance and fulfilment in spirituality which is the common goal of all mankind, too much importance will not be given to these



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things, religious intolerance and quarrels will cease, and people will be freely allowed to choose whatever religion is suitable to their nature and capacity, always keeping in view the ultimate goal, the finding of God and the Self through Yoga and the shaping and transforming of their lives in accordance with that discovery. So now Yoga has to take the lead in human life and with its gradual stages take all humanity to its destined divine goal on the earth, the Kingdom of Heaven foreseen by all religions. "We are in an age, full of the throes of travail, when all forms of thought and activity that have in themselves any strong power of utility or any secret virtue of persistence are being subjected to a supreme test and given their opportunity of rebirth. The world to-day presents the aspect of a huge cauldron of Medea in which all things are being cast, shredded into pieces, experimented on, combined and recombined either to perish and provide the scattered material of new forms or to emerge rejuvenated and changed for a fresh term of existence. Indian Yoga, in its essence a special action or formulation of certain great powers of Nature, itself specialised, divided and variously formulated is potentially one of these dynamic elements of the future life of humanity. The child of immemorial ages, preserved by vitality and truth into our modern times, it is

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now emerging from the secret schools and ascetic retreats in which it had taken refuge and is seeking its place in the future sum of living human powers and utilities. But it has first to rediscover itself, bring to the surface the profoundest reason of its being in that general truth and that unceasing aim of Nature which it represents, and find by virtue of this new self-knowledge and self-appreciation its own recovered and larger synthesis. Reorganising itself, it will enter more easily and powerfully into the reorganised life of the race which its processes claim to lead within into the most secret penetralia and upward to the highest altitudes of its own existence and possibility." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*—Introduction).

## VIII

### THE COMING AGE OF SPIRITUALITY

**M**ANY of our educated countrymen cannot sincerely believe that there is any truth in religion or that it can be of any use in bettering the condition of society. This is the modern mentality coming from the West. But already the West has begun to change, and the signs are unmistakable. Thus Mr. C. E. M. Joad, that well-known English savant, wrote in an article named, *The Wheel Comes Full Circle* : ( *New Statesman and Nation*, May 3, 1941): "And now again there is a change. John Strachey writes a book which appeals to faith in the name of love, and Marxist Communism is out of favour with the young. A visitor to Oxford at any time during the last ten years would find politically conscious undergraduates preoccupied with questions of economics in general and problems of Marxist economics in particular. Today the centre of the state is occupied by ethics, with religion waiting to advance from the wings. Did God intend this war? Did he create the Nazis? Did he design a world in which the Nazis were possible? Or necessary? In these and similar questions the

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renewed ethical and religious interest of this generation expresses itself, while the Oxford Union does its best to inform the world that it considers a return to God through organised religion an essential condition of the reconstruction of the post-war world.... 'God', in fact—as a wit remarked to me after the debate referred to—"God is the coming man."

The unwillingness of the modern man to accept anything uncritically is no doubt a virtue; but the vice, and therefore the danger is that he is not often sufficiently critical. He professes to reason, but more often than not his reasoning is too facile and superficial, and he easily becomes a dupe of any slogan that is preached with some force. How the Marxist slogan, 'Religion is the opiate of the people', has benumbed the critical faculty even of our educated men will be evident from the following statement recently made by a distinguished Professor of an Indian University: "In our country those who are successful in life do not bother about religion, those who are failures become Vedantists, those who are avaricious and greedy become communalists. If we want progress, we must steer clear of religion which is poison of life. Sanction of religion is generally brought to sanctify that which is otherwise very bad and which retards progress". As a specimen of loose, uncritical,

imitative thought coming from a man in such a high and responsible position, this seems to us to be unsurpassable. Was Siddhartha, the prince of Kapilabastu, a failure in life when he turned to Vedanta and spiritual life? In our own times, was Vivekananda a man of a defeatist mentality, a specimen of human failure? When Sri Aurobindo turned to Vedanta and Yoga, he was the Vice-Principal of the Baroda college, loved and respected by the Gaekwar himself. "When I approached God at that time," said Sri Aurobindo long afterwards in his famous Uttara Para Speech, "I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me, and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta". So he turned to the Yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if his idea was right. He was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign; so he had many doubts about religion. But that did not prevent him from trying to find out the truth himself. And we know how he succeeded. The agnostic and sceptic in him

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was answered, he got proofs within and without him, physical and subjective, which satisfied him. Anyone having the truly scientific spirit will follow the same course before rushing to condemn Vedanta and spirituality. Swami Vivekananda also, in his pre-monk days, was an agnostic; he also was influenced by English education and European thought; but he did not succumb to that like so many of our Professors of the present day. A born seeker of truth, he approached some religious worthies of his time, but none could satisfy him. At last he went to Sri Ramakrishna and in the very first interview asked the question: "Have you seen God?" Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Not only have I seen God but I can show Him to you; I see Him more intensely than I see you." There are always God's men in the world who can show God to you; seek and you will find.

To say that religion is poison is to out-Marx Marx himself. No one will deny that gross abuses of religion have caused untold sufferings to mankind. But what good thing in human life has not been perverted or abused? We see before our eyes to what atrocious abuses Science and scientists are lending themselves. If we consider impartially, we are bound to say that no other single thing than religion has contributed so much to human

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civilisation and culture. Religion has always supported the moral and social rules and regulations without which human society would have fallen to pieces and human progress would have been impossible. It is true that the religious ideals of Truth, Good, Beauty, Love, have not yet been realised in human society, and often in the name of these ideals unspeakable misery and suffering have been inflicted upon men; but to say that the very pursuit of these ideals has not paved the way to their ultimate realisation is to shut one's eyes to reality. That is not to say that religion, as it is now and as it has been in the past is sufficient; it has to grow and change with the growth of humanity in knowledge and experience and with the change in the conditions of human life. As a matter of fact, moral and social rules as well as the creeds and dogmas of religion have done their work in giving a preliminary discipline to mankind; but now they must give place to something higher, and that will be the contribution of the coming spiritual age. To take a concrete example, spirituality will not simply ask a man to love his neighbour as himself, but will show how he can conquer the egoism and selfishness which is inherent in human nature and which is at the root of all oppression, exploitation and injustice in society; and this it will do by making

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men realise that in their true self they are one with all men and with God himself. It is on this spiritual basis that the true lasting basis of liberty, equality and fraternity can be laid. Until that basis is secured all attempts to realise these ideals are bound to fail.

Those who really want to take a critical view of religion and spirituality must give up two misconceptions, first, that religion is a thing of mere belief or faith and that its truth can never be proved or verified; and, second, that science is hostile to religion. Opponents of religion ask, where are the proofs of religion? and like jesting Pilate they do not wait for an answer. It is true that in religion one has to start with belief or faith; but is not that the case also with all scientific theories and hypotheses? Men are born with an innate faith in religion, but its truth is afterwards verified by direct knowledge and experience as much as scientific truths. Some one tries to explain away religion by saying: "The need to worship probably derives from our relations with our parents in our second and third years. Its elimination, if that were found necessary, would probably not be beyond the power of pedagogy". The repeated use of the word "probably" shows that something in the speaker himself does not accept the statement which he is nevertheless making under some



extraneous influence. Our mind may doubt, but the soul in us knows that God is the highest and the sole truth. Instead of saying that religious feeling grows out of our filial feeling, it would be truer to say that men are born with religious feeling, and it first manifests in the child as its devotion to its parents. Anyhow, most people in their adolescence pass through a period of agnosticism and scepticism, before they finally accept religion as true. So the argument that religion is only an extension of the filial attitude cannot stand. As with the individual, so with the race as a whole; starting with religion, it has had to pass through an age of scepticism and denial in its adolescence. Now the wheel comes full circle. In terms of Hegelian or Marxian dialectic we can say that religion was followed by its antithesis, atheism and scepticism; now we are on the eve of a great synthesis of faith and reason, of religion and science and that will be the accomplishment of the spiritual age into which Humanity is just beginning to enter. The failure of Soviet Russia to eradicate the religious feeling in spite of vigorous cultural and political methods followed shows that its truth cannot be denied and that it would be wiser to examine it rationally and critically; and if its truth is established, it must be given its proper place in the new organisation of human life.

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But it must at once be realised that in the very nature of things the truths of religion cannot be proved in the same manner as the truths of science. Science deals only with the phenomenal world, the world as it appears to our senses; it has no means of knowing or testing the reality which is behind this phenomenal world and which manifests itself in and through it. That, it is argued, is the weakness of religion: Science is the one going concern of our time, and it is an influence hostile to religion "because it is empirical, and must therefore tend to weaken belief in any system of ideas which lacks empirical foundation". That this was for sometime actually the tendency of science cannot be denied. That was when it was thought that all truths could be found out by its empirical methods. But modern science has definitely given up that attitude; it does not pretend to be a bedrock of Truth. Let us quote here two great scientists of our own day. "A mathematical formula can never tell us what a thing is but only how it behaves.... Every conclusion is quite frankly speculative and uncertain. We are not in contact with ultimate reality". (Jeans). "Even the choicest mathematical speculations melt into thin air. A careful study of the views and ideas of our great philosophers might prove extremely useful. A feeling of doubt persists

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whether the new theory of the structure of the physical world with all its radical innovation is really on the right path." (Planck)

As a matter of fact, empirical methods can never give us certainty; it is only when we enter into a relation of identity with the ultimate reality that we can really know it and all that has emanated from it. That is the method of Yoga, and there is no higher means of attaining certain knowledge. It is not by psychical research following the empirical methods of science that the truth of religion can be established. Such a suggestion only betrays an ignorance of the nature of the problem and of the limits of science of which modern scientists are becoming more and more conscious. Even science does not depend wholly on empirical methods; the greatest discoveries of science have their origin in intuition, but in science the action of intuition is accidental and very limited. In Yoga intuition is not a mere *inspired guess*, but it is organised as a sure means of knowledge, which is verified by physical as well as by subjective evidence.

"If modern Materialism" says Sri Aurobindo, "were simply an unintelligent acquiescence in the material life, the advance might be indefinitely delayed. But since its very soul is the search for Knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-

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knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier. We see already that advance in its obscure beginnings....Nothing can be more remarkable and suggestive than the extent to which modern Science confirms in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the very formulae of language which were arrived at by a very different method in the Vedanta—the original Vedanta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishads. And these, on the other hand, often reveal their full significance, their richer contents only when they are viewed in the new light shed by the discoveries of modern Science,—for instance, that Vedantic expression which describes things in the Cosmos as one seed arranged by the universal Energy in multitudinous forms. Significant, especially, is the drive of Science towards a Monism which is consistent with multiplicity; towards the Vedic idea of the one essence with its many becomings". (*The Life Divine* Vol. I. pp 20-21)

The appalling poverty and injustice, inequality and oppression still prevailing in

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society make the younger generation impatient of what they call cants; and they are eager to have some rational programme of social betterment which can immediately be put into practice. But they fail to realise in their youthful enthusiasm that there is no simple immediate remedy for human ills. The forces that oppose us are not evident on the surface; the root of the evil lies deep in human nature and unless it is radically changed and transformed there can be no real and lasting improvement in the condition of mankind. Our young men are not asked to accept cants, but they must habituate themselves to hard thinking and patient work. Otherwise they will fall an easy prey to cures which may prove to be worse than the malady. Thus Marxism wants to build such an external organisation of society as will automatically stop all exploitation and suffering. That seems to our young men to be a very simple and practical programme based on "hard facts". But as a matter of hard fact it is nothing short of Utopian thinking. Human brain cannot devise any law or institution which human ingenuity will not be able to evade, when it likes to do so. As long as man lives centred in the ego, thinking himself to be separate from all other men having an independent life of his own to live, he will somehow find ways and means to exploit others for his own aggrandisement; and

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as with individuals so with groups and nations; they will never cease to fight with each other as long as their outlook on life remains fundamentally egoistic. This root evil of human nature can only be cured by spiritual discipline which is based on the truth that all men are essentially one, that there is one Self or God who has taken multitudinous forms in human beings for the play of interchange and love. Humanity will rise above all evil and suffering only when men learn to live and act in accordance with this fundamental truth of human life and world existence.

But is this practical politics to wait for the total spiritual change of human nature? Will it not take millenniums to accomplish this even if it can be done at all? Certainly every effort should be made to relieve the sufferings of mankind as far as possible under present conditions; but this should be done with an eye on the ultimate necessity and the spiritual aim, and nothing should be done which may stand in the way of the spiritual progress of mankind. It is evident to those who have vision that humanity is on the threshold of a great spiritual change. Nature has been preparing for this for millenniums, and the present unprecedented crisis in human life involving untold suffering may be the means adopted by her to hasten that great realisation.

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All that is required of us is to co-operate with her in this great effort consciously and intelligently, not to hamper her work by harbouring doubts and disbeliefs in our hearts but to keep up an ardent aspiration that God's Will may be fulfilled and His Kingdom, the Satya Yuga, be at last realised on earth.

## IX

### SRI AUROBINDO'S "THE LIFE DIVINE"

PROF. Maxmuller predicted a greater renaissance in Europe as a result of the discovery of Indian thought than what she had witnessed on her contact with the Greek. It is true that the tendency that had begun in earlier times and created Buddhism, Jainism and the great schools of philosophy, and had reached its highest power of elaborate and careful reasoning in Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa, suffered in the end a loss of all original force and only prolonged commentary and criticism on established lines. But it did not take long for the genius of India to resume its creative activities, and Indian thinkers of today have already made definite contributions to modern thought. It has been said about Swami Vivekananda that "one single man changed the current of thought of half the globe—that was his work." (Christina Albers). More recently the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath has become world-wide. The rich and varied contributions of Radhakrishnan have been hailed in the West as a "Counter-attack from the East" (*The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan* by C. E. M. Joad). And



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now there has appeared Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus*, "The Life Divine", which is a unique synthesis of modern thought and man's earliest divine aspirations opening up the vast possibilities of a spiritualised human life on the earth. As a learned reviewer has observed, "Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* undoubtedly marks an epoch in the history of metaphysical thought" (*The Sunday Times*). This is not a book on Indian Philosophy, as it does not, like Indian Philosophy in general, depend on the *Srutis*\* as an authority, but on pure reason, and is thus Metaphysics *par excellence*. It has been said that in spite of all systems of Philosophy and Religion the ultimate ideal of life and supreme duty of man remains unsolved; none of them could satisfactorily answer the questions which the logical intellect of man may put to them. Sri Aurobindo's book does this very thing,—satisfying fully the logical intellect of man. Every age has its own philosophy which seeks to solve the problems of that particular age: *The Life Divine* is pre-eminently the philosophy of the modern age; it is not a mere interpretation of the traditions of the past. "The traditions of the past", says Sri Aurobindo, "are very

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\* It is true that parallel passages have been quoted at the beginning of every chapter to show that the seeds of the conclusions are to be found in such ancient scriptures of India as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Puranas, but that can be said of almost all Philosophy in the world.

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great in their own place—in the past; but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater Future."

"Philosophy", says Will Durant, "is the synthetic interpretation of the whole, or the interpretation of a part in terms of its place and value for the whole." *The Life Divine* is philosophy in both these senses. It has not only interpreted the world as a whole but has also interpreted Mind, Life and Matter, the subjects respectively of Psychology, Biology and Physics, in terms of the place and value of each for the whole. It has been urged that our modern philosophers should take the practical problems of modern life in their hand and find out their right solution in a truly philosophic manner. This is exactly what has been done with great profundity and insight in *The Life Divine*, the closing chapters of which deal philosophically with the great crisis through which humanity is passing today. "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis

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\*On reading Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Will Durant writes from America: "His great work is distinguished first by a gracious style, and by carrying out with masterly grasp and scope the basic traditions of Hindu thought. . . . If I am ever allowed to return to India, I shall make my pilgrimage to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram."

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in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. Reason and science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 1159-62)

Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, in fact, lays down in clear and unmistakable terms the spiritual basis of a new World-Order. The philosophical thesis of the book can be summarised here. It affirms an Absolute as the

origin and support and the secret Reality of all things. The universal then is real by virtue of the Absolute of which it is a self-manifestation, all that it contains is real by virtue of the universal to which it gives a form and figure. The next affirmation is that the fundamental reality of the Absolute is to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Being which is a supracosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the truth underlying the whole manifestation: for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. The manifestation of the Being in our universe takes the shape of an involution which is the starting-point of an evolution. "In the descent into the material plane of which our natural life is a product, the lapse culminates in a total Inconscience out of which an involved Being and Consciousness have to emerge by a gradual evolution. This inevitable evolution first develops, as it is bound to develop, Matter and a material universe; in Matter, Life appears and living physical beings; in Life, Mind manifests and embodied thinking and living beings; in Mind, ever increasing its powers and activities in forms of Matter, the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness must appear, inevitably, by the very force of what is contained in the Inconscience and the necessity in Nature to bring it

into manifestation. Supermind appearing manifests the Spirit's self-knowledge and whole knowledge in a supramental living being and must bring about by the same law, by an inherent necessity and inevitability, the dynamic manifestation here of the divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of existence. It is this that is the significance of the plan and order of the terrestrial evolution; it is this necessity that must determine all its steps and degrees, its principle and its process. There must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter." (*The Life Divine* Vol. II, pp.563-64).

It is for the first time, as Dr. B. L. Atreya aptly observed, that we hear so forcefully from an Indian philosopher, "Earth-life is not a lapse into the mire of something undivine, vain and miserable, offered by some Power to itself as a spectacle or to the embodied soul as a thing to be suffered and then cast away from it: it is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of the being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, but includes in it also the manifold diversity of the self-achieving spirit. There is an all-seeing purpose in the terrestrial creation; a divine plan is working itself out through its

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contradictions and perplexities which are a sign of the many-sided achievement towards which are being led the soul's growth and the endeavour of Nature." (*The Life Divine* Vol. II pp. 588-89.)

These are certainly very great ideals and concepts, but are they warranted by the actual facts of life? Does it not appear that at present not a Divine Will but a satanic will is operating on the earth? Sri Aurobindo answers this question at the very beginning of *The Life Divine*: "These persistent ideals of the race (God, Light, Freedom, perfection, unmixed Bliss, Immortality) are at once the contradiction of its normal experience and the affirmation of higher and deeper experiences which are abnormal to humanity and only to be attained, in their organised entirety, by a revolutionary individual effort or an evolutionary general progression.... To the ordinary material intellect which takes its present organisation of consciousness for the limit of its possibilities, the direct contradiction of the unrealised ideal with the realised fact is a final argument against their validity. But if we take a more deliberate view of the world's workings, that direct opposition appears rather as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction.... The accordance of active Life with a material of form in which the condition of activity itself

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seems to be inertia, is one problem of opposites that Nature has solved and seeks always to solve better with greater complexities; for its perfect solution would be the material immortality of a fully organised mind-supporting animal body. The accordance of conscious mind and conscious will with a form and a life in themselves not overtly self-conscious and capable at best of a mechanical or subconscious will is another problem of opposites in which she has produced astonishing results and aims always at higher marvels; for there her ultimate miracle would be an animal consciousness no longer seeking but possessed of Truth and Light, with the practical omnipotence which would result from the possession of a direct and perfect knowledge. Not only, then, is the upward impulse of man towards the accordance of yet higher opposites rational in itself, but it is the only logical completion of a rule and an effort that seem to be a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings." (*The Life Divine* Vol. I, pp.2-4.)

All the religions of the world testify to the truth of these ideals and aspirations. The Hindus speak of *Satya Yuga*, the Christians of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, the Muslims of *Insanul Kamil* (the Perfect Man) and of the day when "this earth will change into another earth" (*Suratu'l Ibrahim*, XIV. 48.) It is

objected that all attempts to bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth have hitherto failed, "none could ever usher in a race of supermen, not even Sri Krishna himself." Is Sri Aurobindo going to perform this impossible miracle? But Sri Aurobindo does not claim that he or any other man will do it, he says that it will come inevitably in the course of terrestrial evolution; "the Supermind must appear, inevitably, by the very force of what is contained in the Inconscience and the necessity in Nature to bring it into manifestation". What is required of man is a conscious co-operation with this process of Nature and that is the whole meaning of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Sri Aurobindo himself says, "Human social and political endeavour turns always in a circle and leads nowhere; man's life and nature remains always the same, always imperfect, and neither laws nor institutions nor education nor philosophy nor morality nor religious teachings have succeeded in producing the perfect man, still less a perfect humanity,—straighten the tail of the dog as you will, it has been said, it always resumes its natural curve of crookedness." But that does not mean that the work of the great prophets and religious teachers of the world have been in vain. They did their work eminently in preparing mankind for the final evolution, and their influence is still working to help humanity towards its destined goal.



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But that goal will only be reached when there is the supramental manifestation, and that is yet to be. It has been given to Sri Aurobindo to see with Yogic insight that the moment for an attempt towards that final ascension has now arrived; the tremendous rush of the evil forces in the world at the present moment may rather represent the deepest darkness that always precedes a glorious new dawn.

It is interesting to note that some modern writers in the West have independently arrived at conclusions which are very similar to those of Sri Aurobindo. Thus Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard and others are affirming that a change in human nature is the next item on the evolutionary programme. Mr. Heard in his book, *Pain, Sex and Time*, introduces the conception of new mutation occurring this time in the soul of man, as a result of which his consciousness will be so enlarged that it is capable of conceiving and pursuing new ends which are commensurate with his technical mastery of means. If this mutation is to occur, we must co-operate in its production; in other words, we can only change if we will to do so. Hitherto evolution has been a blind, instinctive thrust. In man the evolutionary process has emerged into consciousness and has become consciously intended. Mr. Heard foresees mutation as immediate practical biological politics. Dr. Richard Maurice

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Bucke declares in his *Cosmic Consciousness* that to become Cosmic-conscious or God-conscious is neither supernatural nor supernormal. It is just the next natural and normal step in human evolution. The time must come when all will take this forward step. The distinction of Sri Aurobindo is that though he follows the metaphysical method in *The Life Divine*, it is ultimately based on his own spiritual experience, and he has evolved a sadhana or practical spiritual discipline by which others also can prepare themselves as he has done.

We may note here that though *The Life Divine* can be regarded as a development of the Vedanta, it is not a book on any particular religion or creed but is a rational and metaphysical exposition of the basic truths of all religions. Thus, for example, the relation of the One and the Many in Islamic Mysticism is essentially the Vedantic relation as propounded in *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo does not regard the world as illusory and vain, but as a real creation fulfilling a high divine purpose. We find this pregnant phrase in the Koran, "Do you think I have created the Earth and the Heaven and all that is between them in a jest?" The world is regarded as an illusion only by those who do not see a higher creative power than the mind, as the mind cannot produce a real creation. It is a consciousness and power higher than the mind

through which God manifests Himself in the world, and it is to this intermediate power that Sri Aurobindo has given the name Supermind. We find a Hadith which says, "I am from the light of God, and the whole world is from my light." Thus Sri Aurobindo's Supermind corresponds with Nur-i-Muhammadi or Haqiqat-i-Muhammadi of Islamic Philosophy. In this connection it is worth quoting *in extenso* what a distinguished Professor of Islam has said about *The Life Divine*: "To say the least, it is a marvellous book; the Heart of Reality pulsates in every line, it is Realisation trying to express itself through the imperfect medium of language and logic. I have been a student of Mysticism, Indian and Islamic, Neo-Platonic, Christian and Occidental for about a quarter of a century. Up till now the mystic thinker that impressed me most profoundly was Jalaluddin Rumi. In him I had found thought wedded to intuition and ecstasy, a healthy aspiration to Infinite Bliss and Truth. Rumi is an evolutionary Sufi. He believed in a spiritually creative and emergent evolution. For him Reality is an Infinite Ascent and Descent, but in the remotest point of the Descent the Highest Reality is already involved as the fruit and the entire tree is already implicit in the seed. So far as I am aware no Hindu mystic and thinker has ever approached Rumi more closely than Sri Aurobindo has done....

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The greatest obstacle for the utilitarian rationalist and moralist in the way of appreciating mystical theory and practice has been the suspicion that mysticism negates *life*. The main value of mystical experience and theory as presented by Rumi in the thirteenth century and by Sri Aurobindo at present lies in the fact that they make all Reality real and brook no bifurcation. In both of them I have found the profound Truth that Matter, Flesh and Individuality are all potentially spiritual. This outlook corrects the false view on which flight from life, that is, asceticism is based. In this respect Islam was a great spiritual revolution and a great step forward towards the higher Harmony, that is, God....I was overjoyed to find over again the corroboration of the great truths of higher Sufism in this profound message of Sri Aurobindo demonstrating once more the Unity and Universality of all real Religions. Creeds contend but the Vision of Truth unites....Rational Faith is no leap into the utterly Unknown. One of the soul-satisfying aspects of Sri Aurobindo's book is that he expounds Mysticism which seeks not to mystify but to clarify. The latest achievements of Physics as well as Psychology are accepted as corroborations, even atheism is accepted as a passing phase in the evolution of the Spirit....Even in the darkest movements of Matter God is

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implicit. The material, the vital, the mental, the supramental and the spiritual are all gradations of one Being which according to the Koran is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Appearance and the Reality....These great truths are expounded in the immortal book of Sri Aurobindo. I sincerely believe that all seekers of Truth and all lovers of universal religion will greatly benefit by it.” (*Prof. Khalifa A. Hakim of the Osmania University.*)

## X

### PROSPECTS OF A NEW WORLD

**H**ITLER is defeated, but the havoc done by him has wrecked Europe in such a way that she can never be her old self again. Modern civilization means European civilization; for a long time it has been dominating the whole world; but that Europe to-day is the Dark Continent, all her lights are out. Wherefrom will come the new light that she now requires?

Mr. C. L. Sulzberger, a correspondent of the 'New York Times' thus writes about the havoc done in Europe: "It is entirely likely that military fatal casualties alone have topped 10,000,000. Direct and devious brutalities designed to reduce inimical population either by organised slaughter or planned famine and disease have eliminated perhaps two or three times as many people, including women and children, during Hitler's sanguinary career. Whole blocs and racial groups have been eradicated with typical German efficiency, aided by German madness. Only a fraction of Europe's Jews are today alive. Practically the entire race of Balkan gypsies has been exterminated

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for no reason except that Dr. Alfred Rosenberg considered them an inferior race. Vast masses of Slavs have been slaughtered or driven to slow starvation in Nazified labour camps. The mind of Europe has in large degree lost its contact with that education and culture which is the Continent's historical Pride. The system of schooling erected by the Dictatorships in Germany, Italy, Rumania or the nations over-run or occupied by the Axis, dedicated its instruction to the worship of force, to preparation for fighting, to racial hatred and intolerance, and to personal indoctrinations and immoralities which Biblical philosophers would have associated with Antichrist....What can be done about Europe? It is the obligation of the world to-day to try to heal this wounded continent whose missionaries, whether cultural, religious, artistic or philosophical, have spread western civilization to the far corners of the globe."

But how could all this happen? What was the defect lurking somewhere in the living, powerful and progressive civilization of Europe that led within a short time to two great world wars? Even today many of our countrymen who want a new world order are trying in whatever guise to imitate that civilization and to shape India according to European ideals of liberty and equality; they are not directing their gaze to the mortal defect of that civilization.

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That defect consists in its outward vision: its constant attempt has been to build up political and social institutions in such a manner that liberty, equality, fraternity can be produced automatically like so many machine-made things. It is physical science which has been mainly responsible for creating this mentality—that science does not and cannot see the inner truth of things, it only observes the outer behaviour and from that arrives at some practical results. These may be useful in the organisation of the outer life, but they cannot give the ultimate solution of any problem and do not reveal the inmost truth of human life. But until the individual and social life of man is made to stand on that truth, no problem can be satisfactorily solved and human life will continue to be what it is now, full of disorder, conflict and suffering of all kinds. The ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity are great ideals in the image of which human society is to be re-created; they were formulated in Europe in the eighteenth century “by a sort of primal intuition;” but Europe failed to see that these three great kindred ideas must be founded in the inner life of men before they can be realised in the outer life. Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the *Arya* just after the first World War: “The root of the whole difficulty is ignored, that nothing can be real in life



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that is not made real in the spirit. It is only if men can be made free, equal and united in spirit that there can be a secure freedom, equality and brotherhood in their life. The idea and sentiment are not enough, for they are incomplete and combated by deep-seated nature and instinct, and they are besides inconstant and fluctuate. There must be an immense advance that will make freedom, equality and unity our necessary internal and external atmosphere. This can come only by a spiritual change and the intellect of Europe is beginning to see that the spiritual change is at least a necessity: but it is still too intent on rational formula and on mechanical effort to spare much time for the discovery and realisation of the things of the Spirit."

That work has to be done by Asia and specially by India. Europe has directed her attention to the building up of the outer life; India from immemorial times directed her efforts primarily to the organisation of the inner life and the finding of the things of the Spirit. Many in India even promulgated the view that it was impossible to effect any real reform or improvement in the outer life of man and that any attempt in that direction was as vain as the attempt to make straight the tail of a dog. As long as men due to blind attachment cannot renounce the life of conflict

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and suffering, let them remain there and give them as ordered a life as possible; but the aim of that order should be to bring home to men the hollowness of worldly life and prepare them to renounce it as soon as possible and go out in search of God, of Self. The Lord thus says in the Gita: "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world love and turn to Me."

If we study the history of the vicissitudes of mankind and consider specially the fate to which Europe has brought herself to-day in spite of her colossal efforts to organise and build well the outer life of man, we may very well come to the conclusion that the ideal of world-renunciation is the true one. As long as you cannot give up the world, remain preoccupied with its small joys and sorrows; but as soon as you lose interest in them, do not hesitate for a moment but leave the worldly life and become a sannyasi, *yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajat*. But in fact, how many men do feel this distaste for life and hear the call of renunciation? And out of those who are seeking the Divine how many really attain *siddhi* or success? Thus the Lord says in the Gita:

"Among thousands of men one here and there strives after perfection, and of those who strive and attain to perfection one here and

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there knows me in all the principles of my existence.”

In order to be established in the spiritual consciousness, one has to give up all desires and attachments and find the Soul within himself by inward search. This is not at all easy, and those who have attained this realisation get such peace, fullness and bliss in the Self that they do not want to return to this worldly life which is so full of imperfection and suffering. If they want to do good to the world, their work consists in giving such teaching to the people that they also may renounce the world and establish themselves in the bliss of the Self. Then how can the problems of human life be solved by spirituality? How will the social and political institutions of men be so organised as to pave the way to the fullest development and harmony of the outer life? And if it be the ultimate word of spirituality to renounce the world, then the modern man will not accept it, and spiritual effort will be confined to a few men here and there as it has been so long. On the other hand, it has been clearly proved that mere materialism cannot lead to the perfection and happiness of man.

Sri Aurobindo has found the solution of the problem in the theory of Spiritual Evolution. He has fully established this view by

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comprehensive philosophical reasoning in his great book, *The Life Divine*. And it is not a mere philosophical system to him, not a mere theory or creed, it is a divine truth realised by him through a long course of unique spiritual discipline or Yoga, and it is by resorting to this truth alone that earthly human life can reach its goal of Unity, Love, Freedom, Strength and divine Joy. Those who hold that a radical improvement of human life is an impossibility have this much truth in their view that as long as man does not rise another step higher than the stage at which he has reached by natural evolution,—the stage in which he is “the mental being who leads the life and the body”, *manomayali pranasarirana*, as distinguished from the animal who is led by them—and does not become the superman by going beyond his mind and intelligence and developing a spiritual supramental consciousness and knowledge, no radical change or improvement of human life will be possible; the life of man will continue fundamentally to be what it is now, a varied experience and development through struggle and suffering, with a little superficial change here and there, out of all proportion to the great energy men put into their efforts. But that is not the destiny of human life on the earth, and man, the mental being, is not the last term of the

terrestrial evolution. Man will become superman in the course of that evolution, and the real work and *sadhana* of man today is to make that endeavour by which man can rise to the supramental status. In the words of Nietzsche, the prophetic philosopher of Germany,

“The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth. Upward goes our way from species to super-species.”

But how shall man rise to the supramental level? In the pursuit of supermanhood, Germany, the country of Nietzsche, evolved the Asura instead of the Superman, Asura who is the personification of evil power. Perhaps that was inevitable, for on account of the ignorance in which man is now living he has to proceed through mistakes and failures, suffering many rude shocks. Nietzsche's idea was that man would become superman simply by cultivating power to the utmost extent; will to power, ruthless power—that was his method of attaining supermanhood. The fate that Germany has brought to herself by following that ideal will, it is hoped, serve as a grim warning to the whole world. Man can become superman or god-man only by developing spirituality. Up till now, by spirituality it was generally meant that the *sadhaka* should withdraw himself from the world and from the outer

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life and search for the Soul, the Spirit within himself and be established in the peace and light and bliss of the inner spirit. That is the first condition for being the superman; but if one stops there, he will be only a spiritual man, but not a superman. "The spiritual man", says Sri Aurobindo, "is one who has discovered his soul; he has found his self and and lives in that, is conscious of it, has the joy of it; he needs nothing external for his completeness of existence. The gnostic being starting from this new basis takes up our ignorant becoming and turns it into a luminous becoming of knowledge and a realised power of being. All therefore that is our attempt to be in the Ignorance, he will fulfil in the Knowledge." (*The Life Divine* Vol. II. p. 1050). When established in the truth of the Spirit, one brings down the spiritual power into his outer nature consisting of mind, life and body and allows it to be radically changed and transformed, only then the spiritual man becomes the superman, and that will be the true divine life. Up till now, all who individually attained siddhi or spiritual realisation attained only to the status of the spiritual man, and as we have already said their number has been very few. But these spiritual men are the forerunners of the new higher status to which Nature is endeavouring to raise the human

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race in the course of her evolution. This transition will be achieved by the descent of the supramental force from above. All evolutionary transitions in the past took place in this way. There was a time when there was not a trace of life on the earth which was a glowing mass ejected from the body of the sun. It cooled down through millions of years thus making possible the formation of carbon compounds through chemical action in sea water; with those compounds as a basis for vital functions, the vital force descended from the vital plane and established life on the earth in the physical plane. At first the formation of life was on the smallest scale, but in course of time that has changed the face of earth making it green with vegetation and afterwards full of infinite varieties and types of animal life. In the same way, when the earth evolved an animal type suitable for the manifestation of mind, a mental force descended from the mental plane and as a result of this, there was the advent of the human being on the earth. Now has come the time of another great transformation, the greatest and most significant of all; the supramental force is pressing upon the earth and it will manifest itself in those men and women who will prepare themselves spiritually to receive it; and once that is established, there will be the beginning of a new race

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on the earth, a race of gnostic beings or supermen. Then terrestrial evolution will reach its apex.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that this supramental transformation, this uplifting of man to superman cannot be suddenly accomplished in one day. Many steps have to be ascended in order to reach the supermind from the mind—the chief of these steps are Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. We need not enter here into a detailed description of this stair of ascension; we may only mention that with each higher step the present defects and imperfections of mind, life and body will be removed and new powers and possibilities of knowledge, work, love and bliss will be manifested in men. In this way when the supramental level will be reached, a spiritual divine life will be realised in this material body on the earth; but then this material body will not remain so inert and inconscient as it is now, it also will develop its latent consciousness and powers making this body free from disease, old age and death and a fit vehicle for the manifestation of a higher divine knowledge, power and love.

But if it is extremely difficult to find the Spirit and become the spiritual man—only a few exceptional men have ever any chance of attaining that realisation,—how will it be



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possible for the ordinary man to ascend still higher levels and attain supermanhood? Is that practical politics? And even if that be accepted as the goal of man on the earth, will it not take aeons to ascend gradually all these spiritual levels and reach the summit? That would have been the case if man had to ascend upwards by his own unaided effort. But the difficult endeavour that is now necessary to attain to spirituality will become much more easy and simplified once the supramental force descends on the earth and extends its influence on the earth life. The influence of the descent of that divine power will be felt not only in spiritual effort but even on the ordinary worldly life of men. Thus Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*:

“An incidence, a decisive stress would affect the life of the lower evolutionary stages; something of the light, something of the force would penetrate downwards and awaken into a greater action the hidden Truth-Power everywhere in nature. A dominant principle of harmony would impose itself on the life of the Ignorance; the discord, the blind seeking, the clash of struggle, the abnormal vicissitudes of exaggeration and depression and unsteady balance of the unseeing forces at work in their mixture and conflict, would feel the influence and yield place to a more orderly pace and harmonic steps of the development of being, a more revealing arrangement of

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progressing life and consciousness, a better life-order. A freer play of intuition and sympathy and understanding would enter into human life, a clearer sense of the truth of self and things and a more enlightened dealing with the opportunities and difficulties of existence." (*The Life Divine* Vol. II. pp. 1030-31). "The gnostic consciousness in him (the supramental gnostic being) would perceive and bring out the evolving truth and principle of harmony hidden in the formations of the Ignorance; it would be natural to his sense of integrality and it would be within his power to link them in a true order with his own gnostic principle and the evolved truth and harmony of his own greater life-creation. That might be impossible without a considerable change in the life of the world, but such a change would be a natural consequence of the appearance of a new Power in Nature and its universal influence. In the emergence of the gnostic being would be the hope of a more harmonious evolutionary order in terrestrial Nature." (*The Life Divine* Vol. II. p. 1033)

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have seen in their divine Yogic vision that the descent of the supramental is in fact preparing and progressing. Its influence is being felt on the earth, That is why the forces of evil and falsehood have risen up with firm determination to

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frustrate this unique opportunity offered to mankind and thus perpetuate their evil sway over human life keeping it full of conflict and suffering in which these Asuric forces by their very nature take a perverted delight. That is the inner meaning of the cataclysm through which the world is passing today, it signifies the turning of a new cycle. The greatest work before man to-day is to prepare the ground and fulfil the conditions so that the divine supramental power may descend on the earth. As with the advent of the spring, a southern wind begins to blow and there is an outburst of new life throughout the earth, so with the descent of the supramental force there will be the advent of an all-pervading spiritual atmosphere which will inaugurate a really new order of human life on the earth.

If only a number of men and women can join in an ardent and constant aspiration for the supramental life and completely surrender themselves and put themselves into the hands of the Divine Mother with entire reliance and trust, giving up all egoistic desires and attachments, they will be the nucleus for the manifestation of the supramental truth on the earth and that will exert an all-pervading influence paving the way to the solution of all the problems which are baffling mankind today,—there is no other way and this is the core of the

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spiritual endeavour of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The world to-day is full of the clamour of many voices and rent with many conflicting creeds and ideologies. Though there is some element of truth in each of these competing ideologies and "isms", none of them has the whole truth and none can be the foundation of lasting peace and true unity of all mankind. So we should shun all extreme views and practise mutual toleration and compromise, so that ill-feeling and bitterness may not be aggravated by useless conflicts and struggles: on the other hand, we must hold fast to the essential truth of human life, the evolution of the supermind in man—that is the message of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to India and to the whole world today.

## *Appendix*

### SRI AUROBINDO ON THE WAR

WHAT we say is not that the Allies have not done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces. I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have been that in their dealings with each other,—at least all who had the strength and got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? But there is the other side also. You are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; looked at like that all have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England—the present Allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and spread too the institutions which try to embody them. Whatever the relative worth of these things—they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage of the forward evolution. (What about the others? Hitler, for example, says it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples, they must be kept as serfs and

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labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be free without seeking any personal gain; she has also conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, to Iraq without a struggle. She has been moving away steadily, if slowly, from imperialism towards co-operation; the British commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction; she is moving in idea towards a world-union of some kind in which aggression is to be made impossible; her new generation has no longer the old firm belief in mission and empire; she has offered India Dominion independence—or even sheer isolated independence, if she wants that,—after the war, with an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves.... All that is what I call evolution in the right direction—however slow and imperfect and hesitating it may still be. As for America she has forsworn her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, she has conceded independence to Cuba and the Phillippines. ... Is there a similar trend on the side of the Axis? One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once again, it is the forces working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface details. The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated. ...

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For us the question does not arise. We made it plain in a letter which has been made public that

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we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions which are common to human nature and all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces: the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly and might lead even, at the worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least have stood for human values, though they may often act against their own best ideals (human beings always do that); Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (*e. g.*, the virtues of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race). That does not make the English or Americans nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a primary importance. . . .

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The Kurukshetra example is not to be taken as an exact parallel but rather as a traditional instance of the war between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because the

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leaders made themselves his instruments. It is not to be envisaged as a battle between virtue and wickedness, the good and the evil men. After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, quite unselfish and without passions? . . . .

Were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests—just and right, no doubt, but still personal claim and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharmya yuddha*, but it was for right and justice, in their own case. And if imperialism, empire-building by armed force, is under all circumstances a wickedness, then the Pandavas are tinted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter that they might become supreme rulers over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India? That would be the result of weighing old happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact such an empire was a step in the right direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now,—in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter. . . .

We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or mediæval or quite recent times but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was



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envisaged but nothing more—exploitation was not excluded. The modern ideas on the subject, the right of all to liberty, both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement; this is a new Dharma which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice,—an infant Dharma which would have been throttled for good if Hitler succeeded in his “Avataric” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject-nations naturally accept the new Dharma and severely criticise the old imperialisms; it is to be hoped that they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world-order evolves, even if at first stumblingly or incompletely, which will make the old things impossible—a difficult task, but not absolutely impossible.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities open to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove the

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peril of black servitude and revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important tragic issue before us.



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SONGS FROM THE SOUL

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